

Quick Guide: Collaborative Logic Model Building: Centering Staff, Participant, and Community Voices

Is it helpful to work with a researcher on a logic model, and how can we make sure the process is collaborative rather than researcher-driven?

Working with a researcher does not have to mean turning over development of your logic model. A researcher can provide a light-touch review of a logic model your program has already developed, or can join a deeper collaborative process in which staff, participants, and community partners help define how the program works and what success should look like.

Overview of this ARCvi Quick Guide

This Quick Guide was developed from a 2025 article titled [“Collaborative Creation of a Logic Model and Performance Metrics for Evaluating a Violence Reduction Program”](#) by researchers from Temple University’s Department of Criminal Justice, community research partners, and the co-CEOs of YEAH Philly. The authors describe the overall capacity-building framework for their process evaluation, and one of the key tasks of co-producing a logic model and performance measures. This Quick Guide provides a generalizable summary of those research-based tasks.

A practical collaborative process

Roman and colleagues (2025) describe a participatory evaluation-capacity-building process that can be adapted by programs working with research partners. The process was iterative: information was gathered from staff and participants, interpreted with program leaders and staff, translated into a logic model, and then used to build performance measures.

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Understand the program	Build the team	Listen & gather data	Interpret & refine	Build measures

Adapted from the phased participatory evaluation model described in Roman et al. (2025).

Step 0. Decide how much research support you need

- **Validation only:** Ask a researcher to review an existing logic model for clarity, completeness, and alignment between activities and outcomes.
- **Facilitated refinement:** Use a researcher to help convene stakeholders, review evidence and program records, and refine the model together.
- **Full co-development:** Build the model through a participatory process that includes staff, participants, community partners, and researchers from the beginning.

Step 1. Build a shared understanding of how the program is supposed to work

Start with what already exists. Review program descriptions, grant proposals, service protocols, intake forms, reports, and other documentation. Then talk with program leaders and frontline staff about the program's mission, who it serves, what staff actually do, and what changes they expect to see.

- Identify the program's major inputs/resources, activities, outputs, and intended outcomes.
- Ask where the written model differs from how the work happens in practice.
- Clarify which outcomes are short-term, intermediate, and longer-term—and which are most meaningful to participants and the community.
- Use theory to clarify how and why change is expected to occur. Researchers can help staff, participants, and community stakeholders consider criminological, sociological, public health, or other theories that may help explain the mechanisms connecting program activities to outcomes. The goal is not to fit the program into a preexisting theory, but to use theory to identify the individual, relational, organizational, neighborhood, and structural factors the program may be trying to influence and to make those pathways explicit in the draft logic model.

Step 2. Build the collaborative team—and build capacity as you go

Do not limit the process to program executives and academic researchers. Include people who understand the work from different vantage points. Depending on the project, that may include frontline staff, program participants, community members, and trained peer or community researchers.

- Be explicit about roles: Who helps shape questions? Who collects data? Who interprets findings? Who has authority to revise the model?
- Provide training or orientation so community and program partners can participate meaningfully in research and evaluation tasks.
- Compensate community participants and peer researchers whenever possible.

Capacity building is part of the product

A collaborative logic model process can leave an organization with more than a diagram. It can strengthen staff knowledge of evaluation, build internal data skills, support robust performance measurement, and increase the program's ability to monitor and improve its own work over time.

Step 3. Listen to participants and gather information that can test the draft theory of change

- Use interviews, focus groups, observation, existing program data, or other appropriate methods to learn how participants experience the program and what changes they believe matter. Questions should connect to the program's mission and draft logic model while leaving room for outcomes that program leaders or researchers did not anticipate.
- Ask stakeholders to think about the sequence and timing of change: What might change first or relatively quickly after someone begins participating? What changes might take longer to develop? Which outcomes are realistic during the period of active participation, and which may only become visible months or years later?
- Distinguish immediate or short-term outcomes (such as changes in knowledge, attitudes, trust, motivation, coping, or goal-setting) from longer-term outcomes, such as sustained behavior change, greater stability, reduced legal system involvement, or broader community-level change. The specific outcomes and timeframes should come from the program model and stakeholder experience rather than being imposed in advance.
- Ask participants what they receive from the program, what they find most useful, what they notice changing first, and what they hope will be different over time. Even participants who are young children should have the

opportunity to contribute their perspectives because they have a unique understanding of how they experience the program, what feels meaningful or helpful to them, and what changes they notice in their own lives. Staff and community partners can also help identify when particular changes are reasonably expected to occur.

- Pilot questions with participants or staff and revise language that is unclear or does not fit the local context.
- Whenever possible, preserve participants' own words during early analysis rather than immediately translating their experiences into academic terminology.

Step 4. Interpret the information together and refine the logic model

Analysis should not be a one-way handoff from researchers to the program. Bring preliminary themes, interpretations, and draft logic-model elements back to program and community stakeholders. Ask whether the findings reflect their experience, what is missing, and where interpretations need to change. Review and refine the proposed mechanisms for change by asking whether initial mechanisms discussed reflect how participants, staff, and community stakeholders actually understand change to occur, and whether any important pathways are missing.

- Use participant language to identify meaningful learning, attitude, behavior, and circumstance changes.
- Look for gaps or misalignment between what leaders expected and what participants describe.
- Revise the model through repeated review rather than treating the first draft as final.

Why iteration matters

Researchers may overlook incremental but meaningful changes that are obvious to staff or participants. Repeated interpretation and feedback can surface outcomes that traditional evaluations often miss and can reduce the risk that the final model reflects researcher assumptions more than community experience.

Step 5. Turn the finalized logic model into performance measures

Once the logic model reflects a shared understanding of the program, use it as the blueprint for measurement. For each important activity and outcome, ask: What would we need to observe or record to know whether this is happening?

- Measure more than program reach. Include indicators of whether core activities occurred, their frequency, intensity or quality when relevant, and whether participants experienced intended changes.
- Make sure measures cover the pathway from program activities to short-, intermediate-, and longer-term outcomes.
- Pilot measures before finalizing them. If a measure is too burdensome, unclear, or not useful for decision-making, revise it.
- Build the measures into routine program systems so the organization can use them without depending on an outside evaluator.

A useful structure for the final logic model

Inputs / Resources	Program Activities	Learning / Attitudes	Actions / Behaviors	Long-term / Community
What makes the work possible	What the program does	Early changes in knowledge, mindset, skills	Changes in behavior or circumstances	Longer-term individual or broader outcomes

The exact categories can vary. The goal is to make the program's theory of change visible and measurable.

Keep the process collaborative

- Meet regularly and verify alignment rather than assuming researchers and program partners share the same interpretation of goals, activities, or success.
- Build in time for trust, reflection, feedback, and revision. Participatory work usually takes longer than researcher-led model development.
- Treat disagreement as useful information. Staff and participants may challenge the language, causal pathway, or outcomes in the draft model—and that can make the final product stronger.
- Program leaders should make sure that researchers share ownership of the products. Decide together how the logic model and findings will be used, presented, and updated.
- Plan for sustainability. The organization should be able to maintain the logic model and performance measures after the research partnership ends.

Learn more

This Quick Guide is adapted from: Roman, C. G., Talley, A., Sierka, C., George, K., Van de Water, K., & Aye, J. (2025). *Collaborative Creation of a Logic Model and Performance Metrics for Evaluating a Violence Reduction Program*. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 24. [Open the full-text article](#)

The article describes the full six-phase evaluation-capacity-building model, including a final phase focused on co-designing and disseminating products and celebrating collaborative successes.

For related ARCvi resources on logic models, performance measurement, and using data for program improvement, visit [ARCvi.org](https://arcvi.org).