

Quick Guide: Using a Logic Model to Guide Performance Measurement

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A logic model should do more than describe your program. It can serve as the blueprint for your performance measurement system.

A logic model lays out what resources a program has, what staff do, what those activities produce, and what changes should occur if the program works. Once those connections are clear, program developers can identify the small set of data needed to determine whether each important part of that pathway is working.

The basic idea: What we put in → What we do → What happens because we did it → What ultimately changes

Step 1. Start with what your program is trying to accomplish—and at what level you expect change

Before choosing measures, be clear about your program's theory of change. What problem are you trying to address? Who are you trying to reach? What does the program do with those participants? Why should those activities lead to the outcomes you expect?

Just as important, identify the level at which you expect those changes to occur. Some programs are designed primarily to improve outcomes for the **individuals** they serve. Others expect their work to reduce violence within **a geographic area**—whether it be a block, neighborhood, police district, ZIP code, or city (or something else). Some programs expect outcomes at *both* levels (or even more levels, such as individual, neighborhood and society).

Throughout this guide, we use the term “community-level” to refer broadly to outcomes measured across a defined geographic area.

Step 2. Put the major pieces of the program into a logic model

A theory of change explains why and how a program expects its activities to lead to desired outcomes. A logic model is the more concrete, often visual representation of that theory. A basic logic model usually includes inputs or resources, activities, outputs, and short- and longer-term outcomes. The purpose is to make the program's theory of change visible: it shows how the work is expected to lead to change.

Example: YEAH Philly's Violent Crime Initiative (VCI)

Below in Figure 1 we provide an example logic model for YEAH Philly's Violent Crime Initiative (VCI). YEAH Philly is a community-based organization in West and Southwest Philadelphia that developed VCI to provide intensive support and wraparound case management to young people ages 15–24 who are involved in the juvenile or adult legal

system following violent or gun-related charges. VCI goals include helping young people move out of legal system involvement, become more self-sufficient, and improve their well-being.

But VCI's logic model does not stop with individual outcomes. It identifies a progression of expected change. At the individual level, early outcomes include increased trust, new skills and knowledge, improved self-esteem, more positive attitudes, and stronger goals and aspirations. These are expected to contribute to changes in behavior and circumstances, such as engagement in school or employment, improved family relationships, fewer conflicts, fewer arrests or probation violations, reduced incarceration, and greater self-sufficiency and well-being. The logic model then extends to broader community and societal outcomes, including better community relations, reduced violence when young people's needs are met, reduced biases, racism and incarceration, and greater youth involvement in policy and systems change.

The logic model below maps how VCI's resources and core activities are expected to produce change at multiple levels. The model incorporates changes identified by young people themselves and connects activities to changes in learning and attitudes, behavior and circumstances, and longer-term community and societal outcomes.

Inputs/Resources	Project Activities	Outcomes: Learning/ Attitudes	Outcomes: Action/Behavior	Outcomes: Long-term, Aggregate/Societal Level
• Kendra (co-CEO) • James (co-CEO) • Other staff • Trainers of skills • YEAH Philly attributes such as safe space provision, on location employment/training • YEAH Philly referral sources and partners • Room for mistakes and error without incarceration • Restorative justice focus • Flexible funding—targeted to specific young person's needs • Employment opportunities	Core Components: • Court advocacy • Case management: needs-based, individualized and holistic services • Community building/ community service • Emotional support • Goal setting • Relationship building • Skill acquisition via in house training and direct mentoring • Socializing, hanging out in safe space • Cash support/financial assistance These above include support for: • Education • Documents/ID • Employment • Hobbies • New opportunities, experiences, travel	• Program satisfaction and trust • New skills and knowledge • Improved self-esteem • Positive mindset and attitude • New aspirations (e.g., interested in and sets long-term goals) • Motivated to achieve short- and long-term goals	• Achieved short-term goals; more focus on longer-term goals • Engaged in new hobbies • Enrolled in/completed post-secondary education or technical training • Fam./child reunification • Fewer conflicts • New positive relationships • Fewer arrests, completed probation, monitoring, etc. with no violations • Reductions in placement/incarceration • Fewer children sentenced as adults • Free from all government intervention (includes no police contact)	• Policy change at all levels to reduce mass incarceration, adult and youth legal system disparities • Reduced biases • More challenges against racism • Improved community relations • Increased sense of community • Youth-led movements: young people have central voice in policy change/inclusion • Reduced violence among community members when basic needs are met • Violence addressed as a public health issue and at the root cause
			Self-sufficiency	
			Wellbeing	

Figure 1. The Violent Crime Initiative (VCI) Logic Model from YEAH Philly

Step 3. Turn each part of the logic model into a measurement question

Once the logic model is carefully constructed, for each important part of the model, ask: How would we know whether this is actually happening? That question turns the logic model into possible performance measures.

Logic model element	Question to ask	Possible measure
Target population	Are we reaching the people the program was designed to serve?	% of enrolled participants meeting eligibility criteria
Case management	Are participants receiving the intended level of support?	Number of contacts; % contacted at expected frequency
Court advocacy	Are participants receiving legal system support?	Court appearances attended; jail/placement visits; participants receiving advocacy
Education support	Are participants becoming connected to education?	Reconnected to school; graduated/GED; enrolled in training or college
Employment support	Are participants moving toward employment?	Employed; internship participation; job-training enrollment
Housing support	Are urgent stability needs being addressed?	Participants needing emergency housing; participants obtaining stable housing
Skills and relationships	Are participants developing skills and positive supports?	Training completion; participant-reported skills; positive relationships
Legal system short-term outcomes	Are participants receiving less restrictive/less harmful court outcomes?	Charges dropped; probation completion; decertification/return to juvenile court from adult system; diversion instead of incarceration/placement
Legal system long-term outcomes	Are participants less likely to be involved in legal system?	Reduction in police contact; reduction in re-arrest/re-incarceration
Self-sufficiency	Are broader expected changes occurring?	Progress toward goals; 1 year stable housing; employment with living wage; purchased car; savings account

In VCI, staff partnered with a research team to interview participants and staff to obtain a deep examination of changes occurring at the individual level. This process helped YEAH Philly staff think through both the small and big successes and expand the program's data system to capture the range of successes and to go beyond basic counts. The resulting measures captured both the range of supports being delivered and short-term outcomes related to legal system status, personal growth, skills, and self-sufficiency.

Step 4. Measure the pathway—not just the final outcome

One of the biggest advantages of a logic model is that it prevents programs from jumping directly from “we provided services” to “violence went down.” There are important steps in between.

If a program tracks only the final outcome, such as rearrest or violent victimization, it cannot tell where that pathway succeeded or broke down. Tracking selected measures along the way allows staff to ask more useful questions: Did we reach the participant? Did we provide enough support? Was the needed service actually obtained? Did the participant's circumstances begin to change?



Figure 2. Example Program Pathway to Outcomes

Figure 2 provides a simplified pathway that summarizes the key processes through which VCI’s program components are expected to produce change. These processes represent the potential mechanisms linking program activities to participant outcomes. Unlike the more detailed logic model in Figure 1, Figure 2 is intended as a high-level summary that highlights the steps most useful for identifying core performance measures. The full logic model, in turn, provides the broader framework for developing a more comprehensive performance measurement system.

Step 5. Do not turn every box into ten measures

A logic model identifies what could be measured, not everything that must be measured. Programs should select a manageable set of core measures.

- Is this a central part of our program model?
- Would we want to know if we stopped doing it well?
- Does it represent an important step toward one of our outcomes?
- Can staff collect it accurately and consistently?
- Will someone actually use this information to make decisions?

If the answer to most of these questions is no, the item probably does not need to be a core performance measure.

Step 6. Include both process and outcome measures

A useful measurement system should answer two different questions. Process measures tell you whether the program is being delivered as intended. Outcome measures tell you whether the changes the program expects are beginning to occur. So you will want measures that indicate whether the processes theorized are occurring.

PROCESS MEASURES	OUTCOME MEASURES
Are we doing what we said we would do? Examples: enrollment, participant contacts, case-management activities, court visits, referrals, and trainings.	Are the changes we expected beginning to happen? Examples: school reconnection, employment, stable housing, probation completion, fewer arrests, greater self-sufficiency, or reduced violence.

A useful way to identify your core process measures is to return to the pathway laid out in your logic model. If the model says that certain things must happen for the program to produce change, then you should have at least one measure showing whether each of those key processes actually occurred. For example, if the model assumes that participants receive regular case management contact, have their needs assessed, are referred to appropriate services, complete those referrals, and are periodically reassessed, then those steps become natural candidates for core process measures.

This is the approach used in the VCI example above. In Figure 2, buckets 1 through 4 are the processes and 5 through 7 are outcomes. Once the major components of VCI's work were clearly specified in the logic model, the performance measurement system could be built around measures showing whether those activities were actually being delivered.

A note about community-level outcomes

Programs should include community-level outcomes in their logic model when those outcomes are part of the theory of change, but programs may not be able to measure those outcomes themselves. Changes in shootings, homicides, or violent injuries usually require data from outside sources such as police, hospitals, emergency medical systems, or city agencies. Routine performance measurement will therefore often focus most heavily on what programs can directly observe and influence: whether they are reaching the intended population, delivering services as planned, maintaining engagement, and seeing expected changes among participants.

Programs may also ask participants to self-report outcomes such as victimization and re-arrest. However, self-reported information may be affected by recall, reluctance to disclose sensitive information, or the desire to give socially acceptable answers. When possible, self-reported outcomes should be collected consistently and considered alongside other sources of information.

Determining whether a program caused a reduction in violence generally requires a formal evaluation using comparison/control areas or individuals, or other research methods rather than routine performance measurement.

Source for the YEAH Philly Example

Talley, A., Sierka, C., Roman, C., George, K., & Weiland, D. (2024). YEAH Philly's Violent Crime Initiative: Year 1 process summary. Temple University. <https://www.defendyouthrights.org/document/yeah-philly-violent-crime-initiative-year-one-process-evaluation/>

Also see:

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. <https://doi.org/10.1177/16094069251319866>