Logic models and theory of change

Logic models and theory of change are two ways of logically working through the design of a scheme to show and understand all the ways that the scheme attempts to achieve its intended impacts. Setting this out on paper makes it easier to identify measurements that can be used for your evaluation.

Logic models and theory of change are often confused with each other as they have many similarities. Logic models are always graphic, and show the components of a programme. Theory of change is a way of designing a programme by working backwards from a specific change goal, and includes justifications for why specific actions will have the intended outcomes[1].

Logic models[2]

A logic model is a framework which describes the logical links between project inputs, outputs and outcomes. They are typically represented as a diagram showing the relationships between different stages of the project. Although they can vary widely in complexity, logic models all show the steps necessary to achieve the desired outcome. An example of a simple logic model is shown below:

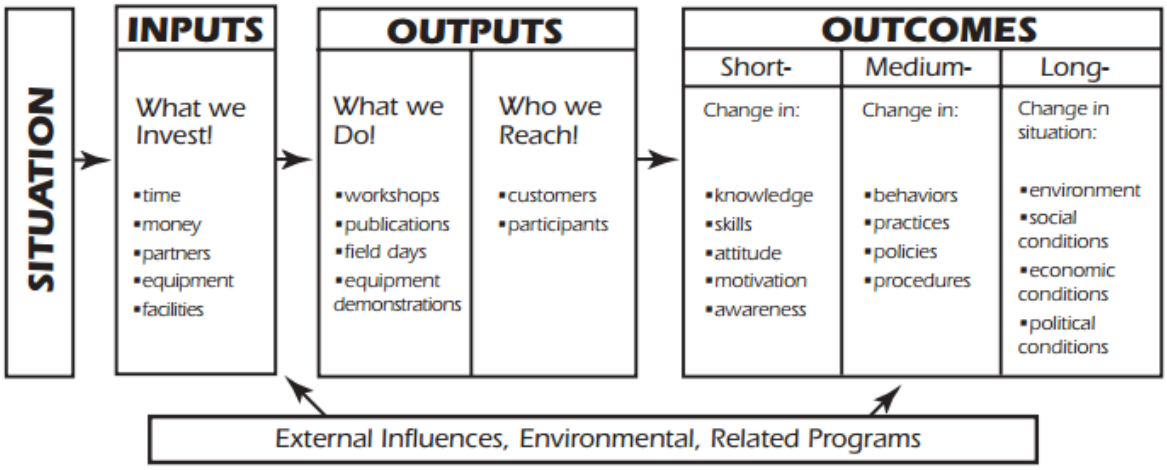

Figure 1: Elements of the Logic Model, from McCawley, Paul F., The Logic Model for Program Planning and Evaluation, University of Idaho Extension[3].

Because the logic model shows the assumed cause and effect expected in the programme, you can then develop evaluation questions to test whether the programme worked as expected in the logic model.

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[1] More information about the differences between logic models and theory of change can be found here: www.theoryofchange.org/wp-content/uploads/toco_library/pdf/TOCs_and_Logic_Models_forAEA.pdf

[2] More information: Developing a Logic Model, from Evaluation Support Scotland: www.evaluationsupportscotland.org.uk/media/uploads/resources/supportguide1.2logicmodelsjul09.pdf

[3] Available from www.cals.uidaho.edu/edcomm/pdf/CIS/CIS1097.pdf

Theory of change

The theory of change approach provides a way of working backwards from programme goals to more specific programme objectives in order to produce a desired change. The illustration below from the Charities Evaluation Service's guide, shows an example of working backwards from the programme goal, at the top, down through changes that need to happen to achieve these, to get to a point where interventions that can be done by the programme can be identified.

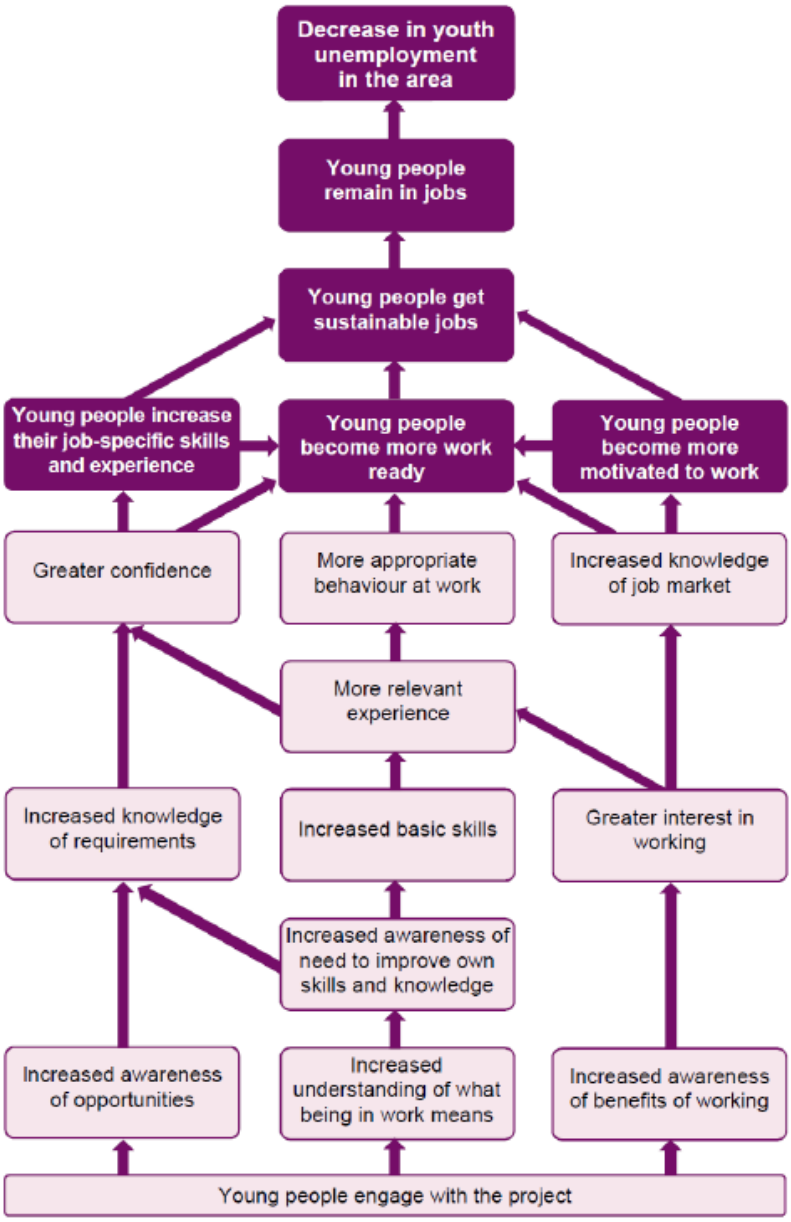

Figure 2: Theory of Change illustration, from Charities Evaluation Service[4]

[4]Ellis, J., Parkinson, D, and Waida, A., *Making Connections: Using a theory of change to develop planning and evaluation.* Charities Evaluation Service, 2011. Available from www.ces-vol.org.uk/tools-and-resources/Evaluation-methods/making-connections-tools.html

Evaluation then involves testing the theory of change that you have developed. What outcomes would you expect to see if the theory of change was correct? How can these be assessed?

Articulating a Theory of Change is one of the most important steps in an SROI approach. In this context it is highly participative and involves engaging all stakeholders to get their opinions on project outcomes and using these as a starting point for analysis.

- More information: Using a Theory of Change, from Charities Evaluation Service: www.ces-vol.org.uk/tools-and-resources/Evaluation-methods/making-connections-tools.html
- NPC Theory of Change tool: www.thinknpc.org/publications/theory-of-change/