

# Getting Started with Project Design and Logic Models

A **logic model** is a tool that visually depicts the rationale behind an intervention. Logic models show how the activities you plan to implement can lead to the changes you hope to see. When interpreting a logic model, the causal connections between steps of the process can be read as “if/then” statements. You can use logic models when planning a project to help you check whether the activities can realistically lead to the results you hope to achieve. The process of intentionally planning a project to achieve desired results is sometimes known as **project design**.

## 1. Identify the key components of good project design

When designing a project, you should identify the steps you will take at each stage and clearly articulate the results you hope to see. Common project design components include:

- **Activities** – the interventions that make up your project (such as workshops, training courses, case management meetings, etc.)
- **Outputs** – the anticipated direct results of your activities (e.g., “100 elementary school-aged refugees receive weekly in-school English support”)
- **Outcomes** – the anticipated direct results of your outputs. Outcomes generally describe *what clients are able to do or how clients feel* as a result of your project (e.g., “75 elementary school-aged refugees report feeling more confident speaking in English during their regular class time”)
- **Objective(s)** – what you ultimately hope to achieve within the scope of your project (e.g., “60 elementary school-aged refugees consistently achieve passing grades”)
- **Goal** – the society-level conditions toward which your project will contribute, but which are not achievable within the scope of your project (e.g., “elementary school-aged refugees succeed in school”)

Logic models help you put these pieces together in a logical and practical way.

## 2. Understand the types of logic models

The most common types of logic models in resettlement work are **theories of change** and **logical frameworks** (known as **logframes**).

- A **theory of change** is a type of logic model that explicitly illustrates the causal pathways between activities, outputs, outcomes, and objectives. It is good practice to also note the assumptions you have made along the way.
- A **logframe** is a table or matrix that summarizes the key elements of a project strategy: the project objective, intended outcomes, planned outputs, and major activities. It outlines indicators that will be used to measure progress, means of verification (the source of data), and assumptions that need to hold for results to be achieved.

See logic models in action using [Switchboard's theory of change and logframe templates](#), with worked examples.

### 3. Start with a theory of change, then develop a logframe

Writing your theory of change first forces you to clarify the cause-and-effect relationships that drive your project. If possible, develop your theory of change in collaboration with other staff members. Creating a theory of change helps encourage discussion about how to best achieve what you want to achieve, your assumptions, risks, and how success will be measured.

Then, once you have justified how your planned project could plausibly lead to the results you hope to see, you can fill in your logframe. Creating your logframe after your theory of change helps you align your measurement plan with your project logic.

Ideally, you should draft your theory of change and logframe before starting a project. This helps you create a solid foundation for your project based on sound logic. However, you can still use these tools to help you improve an existing project or establish better measurement systems.

### 4. Select useful indicators and plan to measure them

An **indicator** is a variable that represents a valid measure of change, such as the number of people who report increased confidence in a skill after attending a workshop. Each component of your logframe should have one or more indicators you will measure to determine how successful you have been at achieving what you planned to achieve. Indicators should follow the [SMART criteria](#) (Specific, Measurable, Attainable/Appropriate/Achievable, Relevant/Realistic/Reliable, and Timebound). Developing indicators based on your logframe will help you measure data points that directly relate to your project and have a clear learning purpose.

Once you have selected your indicators, think carefully about how you will measure them. Consider the staffing, tools, and expertise you will need and create a [realistic data collection plan](#) that gets you the data you need in a timely manner.

### 5. Promote iterative learning

While logic models are a powerful tool for reporting and compliance, they can also support you in [establishing a culture of learning](#) within your team or organization. Consider how you can use the data you collect to identify best practices, reflect on successes, and map out plans for improvement. [Involve your team](#) in these exercises to reinforce the value of data for everyone.

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