



Introduction to Program Design: Developing Your Logical Framework (Logframes)

This information guide provides an overview of key terms and definitions related to program design, describes the key elements of a logical framework, and offers tips for getting started in logframe development. Logical frameworks, or logframes, can help your project design and monitoring and evaluation (M&E) by prompting you to clearly outline what you plan to measure, why you are measuring it, and how you will do so.

Key Terminology

A **logic model** is a graphic representation of all building blocks required to bring about a given long-term goal. It provides a way of visualizing the relationship between a project's activities and the change it seeks to make in a given environment. The change depicted should be possible to articulate using "if/then" statements.

Both **theories of change** and **logical frameworks (logframes)** are types of logic models. For more on theories of change, see Switchboard's [Developing Your Theory of Change](#) guide and [templates](#).

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, the **means of verification** (or source of data), and **assumptions** that need to hold for results to be achieved.

Figure 1. An example logframe structure

	Description	Indicator	Means of Verification	Assumptions
Objective				
Outcome				
Output				
Activities				

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.

Indicators help you assess whether the changes you planned have occurred, and if so, to what degree.

A **logframe** is a table or matrix that summarizes the key elements of a project strategy. All logframes should include the following basic information:

- What you will do and what you hope to see as a result (the project **objective**, intended **outcomes**, planned **outputs**, and **activities**)
- **Indicators** that you will measure to gauge whether you have done what you said you would do and achieved what you wanted to achieve
- Where you will find the data or information needed to calculate your indicators (**means of verification**)
- **Assumptions** that need to hold for results to be achieved

Logframes are a project management tool. They help you and your project team articulate (and remember) what you intend to achieve and what you will measure to determine whether you have achieved it. **A good logframe is the foundation of your team’s monitoring and evaluation plan.**

Different donors may have different logframe templates and use different terminology. You can find a few example logframe templates [here](#).

Even if your donor doesn’t require a logframe, having one for your project is good practice and can make it easier for you to set up systems to track progress, assess the quality of services provided, and measure results.

Note that in the example logframe shown in Figure 1, indicators are organized by whether they relate to objectives, outcomes, outputs, or activities. Table 1 defines these terms, along with goals (which are not typically measured because an individual project does not achieve a goal on its own).

Selecting indicators for each level helps you measure your project’s progress at each stage, which can be useful for identifying which parts of the project were successful and which could be improved.

Table 1. Definitions for key logic model terms

Key Term	Definition
Activities	Tasks needed to deliver a product or service
Outputs	The products, goods, services, and immediate results produced directly by the project and that are required for achievement of the project’s outcomes
Outcomes	The planned or achieved results of an intervention’s outputs, changes that contribute to the project’s overall objective
Objective	The condition or state a project expects to achieve
Goal	The overall improved situation to which the project will contribute (but not achieve on its own)

Start with Your Theory of Change

Start by developing your [theory of change](#) to clearly illustrate how you expect your project activities to lead to your desired objectives. Then, before developing your logframe, ask: *What do we want to learn about this project?* The answers to this question will help you define your M&E plans, guiding which indicators you choose to include in your logframe and how you plan to collect the data required to calculate those indicators.

Develop Your Logframe

Once you have a strong theory of change with logically sound pathways, as well as ideas about what you want to measure, you are ready to develop your logframe.

Writing Indicators

First, identify indicators that you will use to determine whether you have done what you set out to do, i.e., achieved your outcomes and objective.

Indicators should meet the **SMART criteria**. The SMART criteria are broadly used in the field of M&E as standards for measuring indicator quality. Common definitions for the acronym include: Specific; Measurable; Attainable, Appropriate, or Attributable; Relevant, Realistic, or Reliable; and Timebound. Switchboard's [SMART Indicator Checklist and Case Study](#) can help you to determine the quality of your indicators.

Indicators should also be **purposeful**. Just because something can be counted or measured doesn't mean it should. Focus on defining indicators that serve a programmatic purpose and help you learn what you want to know about your project. During the project design phase, consider how indicators will be used. Be sure you can identify potential action steps that you might take after measuring an indicator. This can lead to more efficient use of staff time and better use of project data.

To make sure that indicators are measurable, realistic, and purposeful, think about what data will be required to calculate each indicator. Using an **indicator matrix** can be helpful. See the [Switchboard Indicator Matrix Template](#) as an example.

Means of Verification

Logframes document more than just your indicators. They prompt you to clearly identify *where* the data for each indicator will come from (in the example logframe template in Figure 1, this is entered into the "Means of Verification" column).

For each data point you plan to collect, determine the source of that data. Verify that you have reliable access to this information. For example, if you plan to use clients' paystubs to document their hourly wage as part of your data collection plan for an employment project, make sure you will be able to consistently access these documents. If not, consider whether you can find the data you want elsewhere or select an alternative indicator.

Assumptions

Some logframe templates, such as the one shown in Figure 1, include a place to document your **assumptions**. Even if your template does not have this column, it is best practice to review your assumptions about how your project activities ultimately lead to your objectives and goal.

Sample Assumption: Our existing employer partnerships remain strong, enabling ongoing job placements.

To check your assumptions, consider what other factors need to be in place for the activities you plan to implement to lead to the outputs you expect. For example, if your project includes workshops for parents and you will not offer child care, you are *assuming* that clients have child care options that will allow them to attend the workshop. This may not be a valid assumption.

Your project will inevitably rely on some assumptions about external factors. The goal is not to eliminate assumptions, but rather to feel confident about them holding. In the case of the parenting workshops, for example, it may be valid to assume that parents who have already attended other online classes with your organization have the digital literacy skills needed to register online for your workshop.

Logic Models Can Improve Existing Projects

While you should ideally develop theories of change and logframes during project design, you can take steps to improve project design and M&E at any time—for example, during annual or strategic planning, at the end of a program year, or in preparation for new funding requests. This is true even for projects with strict donor-determined activities and reporting requirements

Mapping your theory of change, considering what you want to learn about the project, developing a logframe, and identifying the resources and operational changes that would be required are always useful efforts. They can help your organization think clearly about what outcomes you hope to achieve, what you would like to learn to enable you to improve and grow, how you might adjust to changing capacity, etc.

Set Yourself Up for Success

With your logframe completed, you will have a clear picture of what data you plan to collect. However, there are other factors that influence your ability to successfully collect, analyze, and use data to measure the success of your project:

- **Budget:** Your logframe can help clarify the resources you will need for monitoring and evaluation. Switchboard's [M&E Plan Template](#) includes budget items for you to consider.
- **Staff skills and capacity:** Consider the tasks involved in your logframe and M&E plan and identify who will be responsible for those tasks. Work with teammates and supervisors to confirm that everyone has the skills and time they need to complete their tasks.
- **Team buy-in:** You are more likely to be successful in your data collection efforts if everyone understands the purpose behind them. Your logframe can be a good way to start the conversation about measuring the results of your project!

Conclusion

Logic models, including theories of change and logframes, are powerful tools for helping you think through how to achieve the results you want to see. Regardless of whether your funder requires you to develop a logframe, they are valuable. They prompt you to carefully consider how you will measure whether your project is leading to the outcomes you hope for. This can help you craft a realistic and effective data collection plan, helping you collect the data you need for compliance and internal learning.

Resources

[Planning for Data Collection and Quality](#)

Assurance: This Switchboard eLearning course helps you make decisions about data collection to minimize stress and collect data that serves a clear purpose.

[Gaining Staff Buy-in for Data Collection and Entry:](#)

This Switchboard guide includes talking points and suggestions for bringing teammates on board with data tasks.

[5 Tips for M&E Culture Change:](#)

This Switchboard tip sheet offers additional tips for establishing the conditions that help all team members feel supported in collecting and using data to strengthen services and ensure compliance.

[Data Analysis and Action Planning Templates:](#)

Ready to turn the data you've collected into action? These templates offer a great starting point.

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