

AMERICORPS TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE SESSION

March 18, 2022

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Center for Research and Evaluation
on Education and Human Services

TODAY'S PLAN

- Welcome!
- The Big Picture: What is your program doing? Why?
 - Theory of Change
 - Evidence
 - Logic Model
 - Performance Measures
- Resources: What tools can help?
- Wrap-Up
- Informal Q&A

Category	%
Executive Summary	0
Program Design	50
Theory of Change and Logic Model	20
Evidence Tier	4
Evidence Quality	8
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Member Experience	10
Organizational Capacity	25
Organizational Background and Staffing	9
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Member Supervision	4
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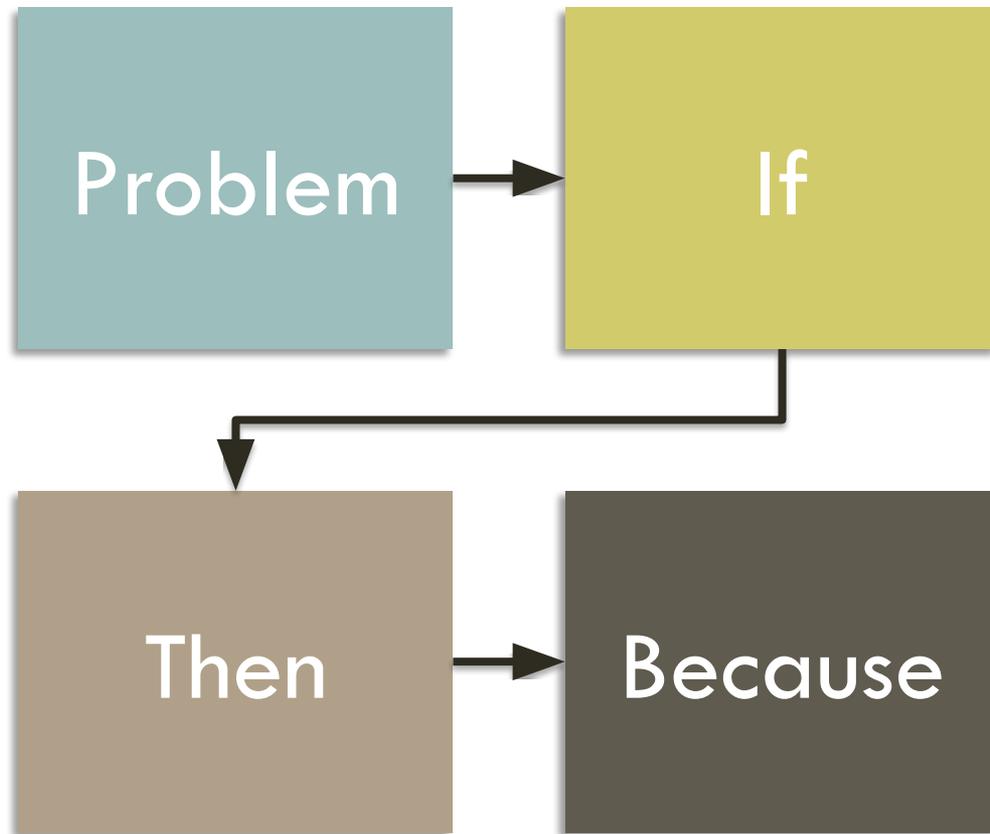
THE BIG PICTURE

What is your
program
doing? Why?

THEORY OF CHANGE

- Narrative description that explains the link between:
 - The community need to be addressed
 - What your program is and how you will deliver it
 - The changes that should occur because of your program
- Includes evidence that your program will lead to the anticipated changes

THEORY OF CHANGE MODEL



Source: AmeriCorps, Volunteer Generation Fund, and ICF (2021). Module 1: Planning Evaluation, Theories of Change. Facilitated by Andrew MacDonald.

BUILDING A THEORY OF CHANGE

PROBLEM What is the problem that requires action or intervention? What is the community need that your program seeks to address?		
IF The primary activity that addresses the problem	THEN The outcome that happens as a result of the activity	BECAUSE Why the program is a solution to the problem

PROBLEM

Community issue or concern that you need AmeriCorps members to help address



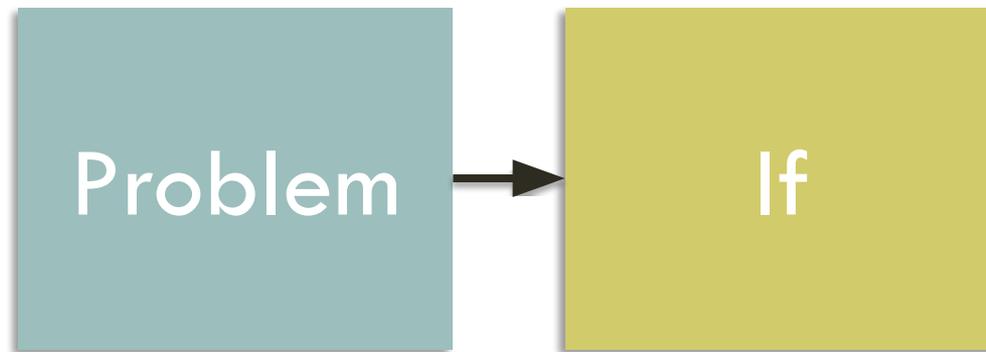
Problem

HOW DO I DESCRIBE THE COMMUNITY PROBLEM?

- What, specifically, is the problem that needs action?
- For whom does the problem exist? Where does it exist?
- How pervasive is the problem?
- How serious is the problem?
- Why does this matter?

SPECIFIC INTERVENTION

The **PRIMARY SET** of activities or intervention for **YOUR AMERICORPS MEMBERS** to address the problem



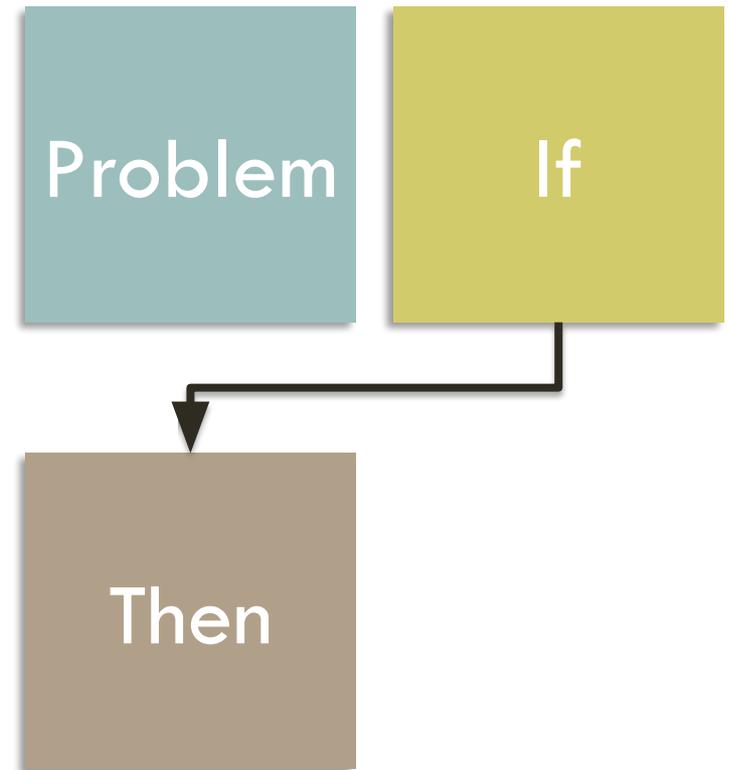
Source: AmeriCorps, Volunteer Generation Fund, and ICF (2021). Module 1: Planning Evaluation, Theories of Change. Facilitated by Andrew MacDonald.

HOW DO I DESCRIBE MY INTERVENTION?

- What, specifically, will the AmeriCorps members do?
- Who will participate or receive the intervention?
- How often will the activities occur (e.g., how many sessions a week)?
- How long will each activity/session be?
- Where will the activity/sessions take place?
- How long will the intervention last (e.g., how many total weeks of sessions)?

INTENDED OUTCOMES

Changes you intend to see in the community (or targeted beneficiaries) because of your AmeriCorps members' service



Source: AmeriCorps, Volunteer Generation Fund, and ICF (2021). Module 1: Planning Evaluation, Theories of Change. Facilitated by Andrew MacDonald.

WHAT OUTCOMES DO I DESCRIBE?

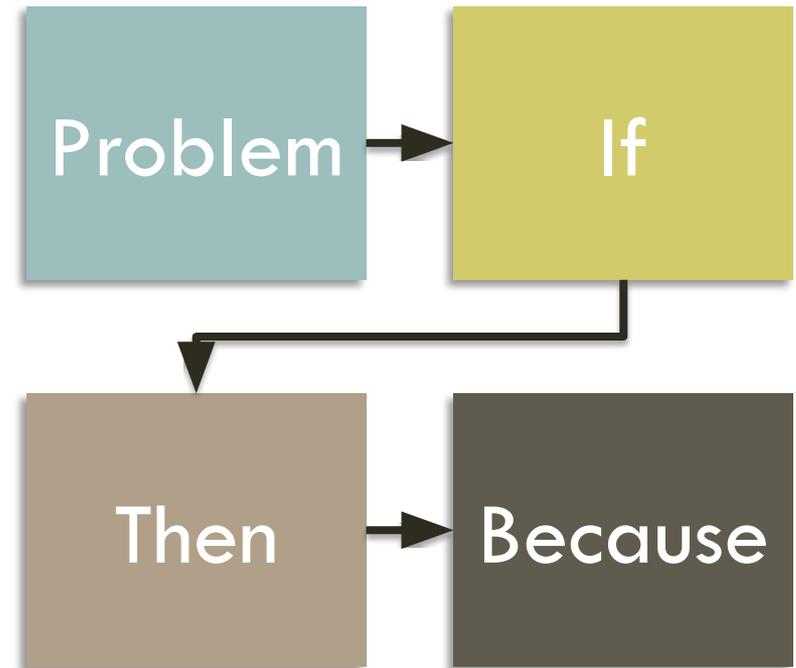
- What knowledge, skills, attitudes or abilities will change because of the AmeriCorps members' service?
- What behaviors will change because of the AmeriCorps members' service?
- What conditions, environments or policies will change because of the AmeriCorps members' service?

HOW DO I DESCRIBE MY OUTCOMES?

- What (and who) will change because of the AmeriCorps members' service in your program?
- When will something change (short, long-term)?
- Does one change precede the other?
Dependencies?

RATIONALE

Explanation of why the intervention will address the problem



HOW DO I DESCRIBE MY RATIONALE?

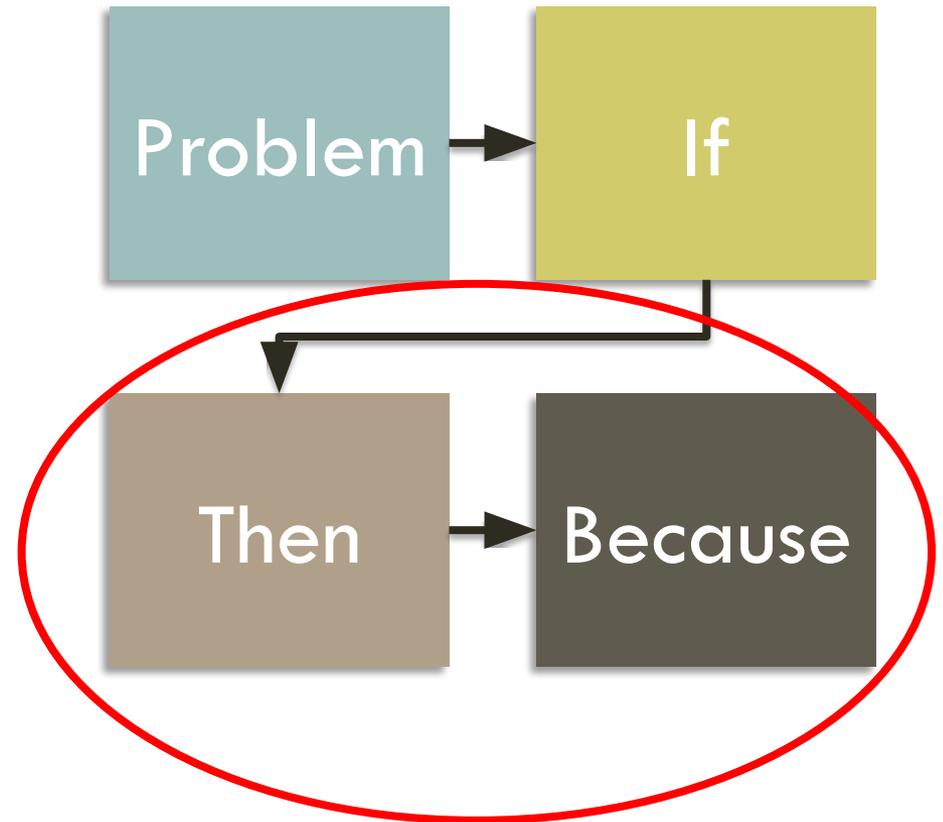
- What is the linkage between the intervention, the outcomes, and the problem?
- How will the intervention address the problem?

BEST PRACTICES - Theory of Change

- ✓ Clearly state the specific activities of AmeriCorps members (i.e., what an average day might include).
- ✓ Specify how much of the intervention will be provided (i.e., dosage) (e.g., 3, 60-minute sessions per week for 12 weeks).
- ✓ Make sure the activities, outputs, and outcomes match the performance measures and logic model.
- ✓ Describe how the set of activities will lead to the specified outcomes, and how short-term outcomes lead to longer-term outcomes.
- ✓ Focus this section on the specifics of the intervention.

EVIDENCE

Evidence from studies or evaluations of an intervention tell how likely your program's activities will lead to your intended outcome(s)



EVIDENCE TERMS

Evidence-Informed: Programs that use the best available knowledge, research, and evaluation to guide program design and implementation, but do not have scientific research or rigorous evaluation of the intervention described in the application.

Evidence-Based: Programs that have been rigorously evaluated and have demonstrated positive results for at least one key desired outcome. (See AmeriCorps Evidence Exchange for interventions with Moderate or Strong evidence.)

EVIDENCE TERMS

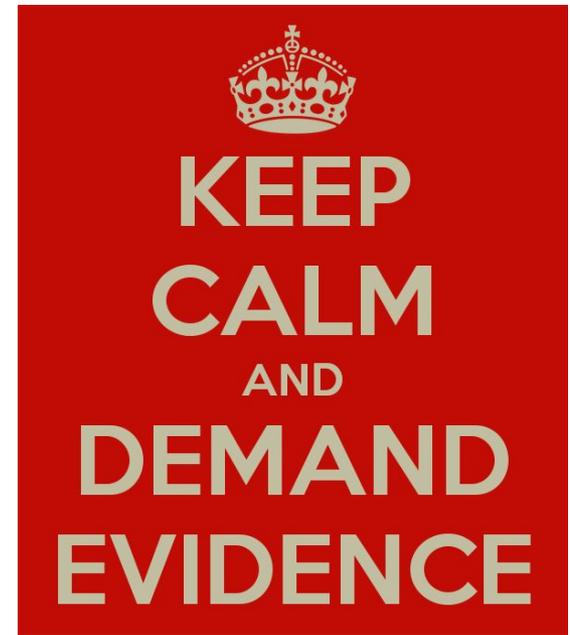
Same Intervention Described in the Application: The intervention evaluated in submitted evaluation reports must match the intervention proposed in the application in all of the following:

- Characteristics of the beneficiary population
- Characteristics of the population delivering the intervention
- Dosage and design of the intervention
- Setting of the intervention
- Outcomes of the intervention

EVIDENCE BASE

The assessment of an applicant's evidence base has two parts:

- 1. Evidence tier**
- 2. Evidence quality**



EVIDENCE TIER

Evidence-Informed

Incorporated research from other evidence-based programs or collected performance measurement data on the intervention

PRE-PRELIMINARY

- Do not have an outcome or impact evaluation of the intervention
- Evidence is not from the SAME intervention
- May have performance data

PRELIMINARY

- Have an outcome evaluation of the intervention
- Evidence is from the SAME intervention
- Evaluation used a non-experimental design

Evidence-Based

Replicate programs that have been rigorously evaluated and have positive results for at least one key outcome

MODERATE

- Have an outcome evaluation of the intervention
- Evidence is from the SAME intervention
- Evaluation used an experimental design
- Evaluation completed by an independent/external entity
- Evaluation is not generalizable (single-site)

STRONG

- Have an outcome evaluation of the intervention
- Evidence is from the SAME intervention
- Evaluation used an experimental design
- Evaluation completed by an independent/external entity
- Evaluation is generalizable (multi-site)

PRE-PRELIMINARY EVIDENCE

- State “Pre-Preliminary” if:
 - You do not have an outcome or impact evaluation of the intervention (or have not submitted)
 - You only have evidence from an intervention that is similar but NOT THE SAME
 - You have performance data
- Describe how your program design is informed by evidence from a previous project
 - Include performance measure data if you have it

PRE-PRELIMINARY EXAMPLE

Applicant's *Ready to Read* program provides small-group tutoring services to 5th grade students for 30 minutes, twice a week. The program is adapted from Famous Tutoring Program's successful approach, which used the same curriculum to provide one-on-one tutoring sessions for 30 minutes every day. A randomized control trial conducted last year found that students in the Famous Tutoring Program increased their scores on standardized tests by 40% more than the control group.

Additional documents: None

PRELIMINARY EVIDENCE

- State “Preliminary” if:
 - You have a report of a non-experimental outcome evaluation of the intervention
 - Report(s) evaluated the SAME intervention as in your application
 - Report(s) showed positive results
- Submit 1-2 recent outcome evaluation reports
- Describe the core components of the intervention in the report, the study, as well as the outcomes

PRELIMINARY EXAMPLE

Applicant's *Ready to Read* program provides small-group tutoring services to 5th grade students for 30 minutes, twice a week. Based on pre- and post- assessments administered by the *Ready to Read* program last year, 350 students gained at least 1.5 grade levels in reading mastery. The effect sizes were moderate and represent a positive result.

Additional documents: Applicant submitted one internal evaluation report of the Ready to Read program describing the results of the pre-post assessment

MODERATE EVIDENCE

- State “Moderate” if:
 - You have a report of an externally done experimental impact evaluation of the intervention
 - Report(s) evaluated the SAME intervention as in your application
 - Report(s) showed positive results
 - Limited ability to generalize beyond the specific site
- Submit 1-2 recent impact evaluation reports
- Describe the core components of the intervention in the report, the study, as well as the outcomes

MODERATE EXAMPLE

Applicant's *Ready to Read* program uses the same curriculum, program design, and dosage as the Famous Tutoring Program and is serving similar students. Based on a quasi-experimental evaluation conducted by Famous Tutoring Program at one of their program sites, students gained on average 1.3 grade levels on the Famous Standardized Literacy Assessment, compared to just 0.8 grade levels for the comparison group. The study was conducted by an independent evaluator. The results were significant ($p < 0.05$).

Additional documents: Applicant submitted one independent evaluation report of the Famous Tutoring Program describing the results of the QED study. The evaluation was published two years ago.

STRONG EVIDENCE

- State “Strong” if:
 - You have a report of an externally done experimental impact evaluation of the intervention
 - Report(s) evaluated the SAME intervention as in your application
 - Report(s) showed positive results
 - Ability to generalize to multiple sites and populations
- Submit 1-2 recent impact evaluation reports
- Describe the core components of the intervention in the report, the study, as well as the outcomes

STRONG EXAMPLE

Applicant's *Ready to Read* program provides tutoring services in 25 states across the country. The program hired an independent evaluator to conduct a randomized controlled trial in 16 states, including both rural and urban sites as well as student populations with different ethnic/racial backgrounds. The evaluation found that students in the *Ready to Read* program outperformed students in the control group on 3 specific literacy skills addressed by the program. The results were statistically significant with Moderate effect sizes. Subgroup analysis showed positive impacts in both rural and urban setting and across multiple ethnic/racial groups.

Additional documents: Applicant submitted one independent evaluation report from the Ready to Read Program describing the results of the RCT study. The evaluation was published three years ago.

HOW DO I KNOW WHAT EVIDENCE TIER?

Evidence Tier	Report submitted	Entity conducting evaluation	Study design of submitted report/evaluation
Pre-preliminary	No	N/A	N/A
Preliminary	Up to 2	Internal or external to applicant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Pre/Post, single group •Post only, comparison group •Retrospective Pre/Post, single group
Moderate	Up to 2	External to applicant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Single site, quasi-experimental design with matched comparison and treatment groups •Single site, randomized control trial design
Strong	Up to 2	External to applicant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Multi-site, quasi-experimental design with matched comparison and treatment groups •Multi-site, randomized control trial design

EVIDENCE QUALITY - SELF-ASSESSMENT

If *pre-preliminary* tier:

- To what extent do you provide **relevant** evidence, including past performance measure data and/or cited research studies, to inform your proposed program design?
- Are your studies relatively recent (**within the last 6 years**)?
- To what extent do your cited studies demonstrate a **meaningful positive effect** on program beneficiaries in at least one key outcome of interest?
- **Who conducted the study** (i.e., provide the article title, authors, year of the study, and other details)?

EVIDENCE QUALITY - SELF-ASSESSMENT

If *preliminary, moderate, or strong* evidence tier, consider all *pre-preliminary* criteria PLUS:

- To what extent is the intervention described by the evidence **the same** as your intervention?
- How were the studies you are submitting as evidence **designed** (e.g., non-experimental with pre-test/post-test, quasi-experimental)? Does the design align the grant requirements?
- How were data **collected** (e.g., the who, what, where, when, and how of the data collection)?

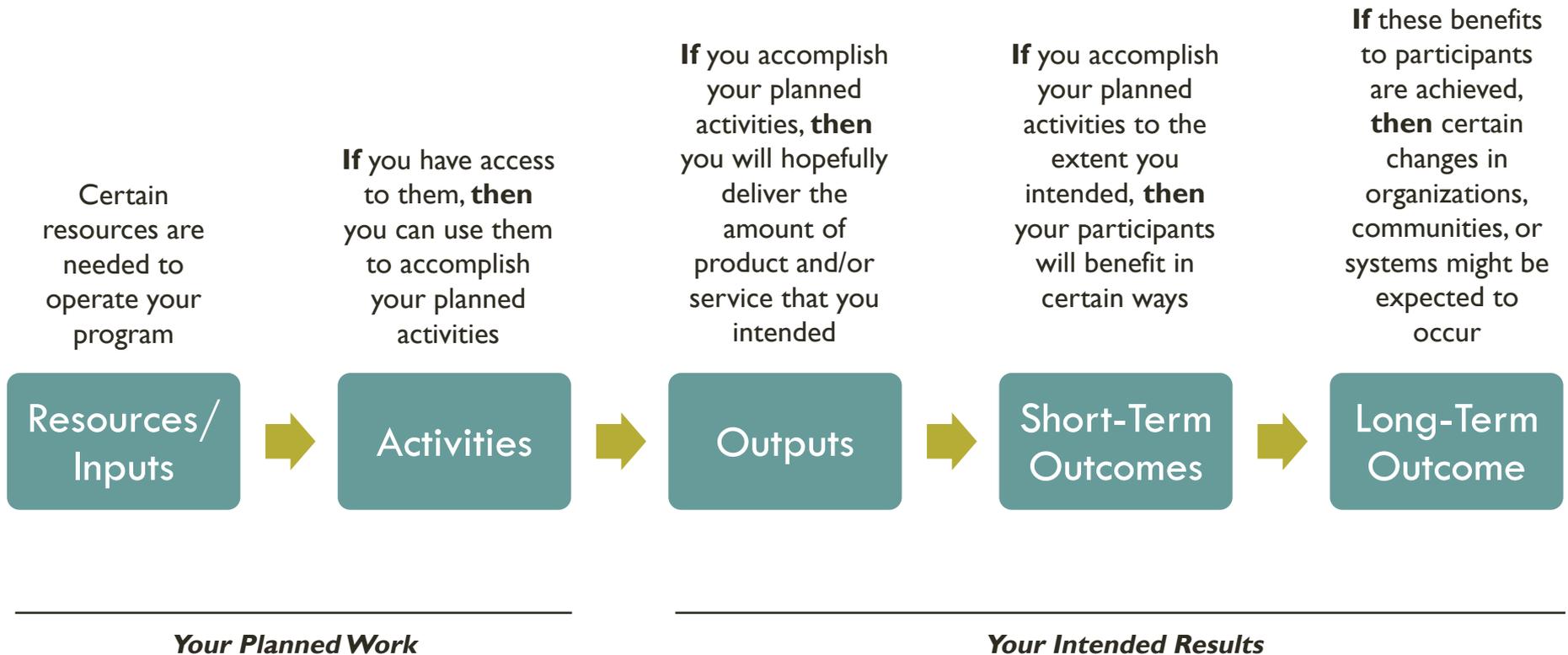
BEST PRACTICES - Evidence

- ✓ Summarize your evidence, including the study design and key findings of your evidence.
- ✓ Make sure the evidence you describe validates the intervention you describe.
- ✓ If you select *preliminary, moderate, or strong* evidence tier, then be sure you describe how the intervention in the submitted reports is the same as the one you propose.
- ✓ Cite evidence from the last 6 years.

LOGIC MODEL

- A required attachment in your application
- A detailed visual representation of a program and its theory of change
- Communicates how a program works by depicting the intended relationships among program components (i.e., inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes)

HOW A LOGIC MODEL WORKS



EVERYDAY LOGIC MODEL: COOKIES

INPUTS	ACTIVITIES	OUTPUTS	OUTCOMES		
			SHORT TERM	MEDIUM TERM	LONG TERM
Baker	Pre-heat oven to 350 degrees	# cookies dropped onto cookie sheets	Decreased hunger	Improved family relations	Increased weight
Flour, sugar	Mix together ingredients	# cookies baked	Decreased crankiness		
Butter, eggs	Drop tablespoons of mixture onto cookie sheet	# cookies stored in cookie jar			
Chocolate chips	Bake for 8-10 minutes				
Oven	Cool cookies and store				
Cooking supplies					

COMPLETE THE LOGIC MODEL FROM 1 TO 4

4

2

3

1

INPUTS (What we invest)	ACTIVITIES (What we do)	OUTPUTS (How we know)	OUTCOMES (What changes)		
			SHORT TERM	MEDIUM- TERM	LONG- TERM
<i>What do you have and what do you need to make the activities and outcomes happen?</i>	<i>What activities must be undertaken to make the changes happen?</i>	<i>What evidence remains to let you know that activities happened?</i> <i>What are the footprints left by the activities?</i>	<i>What will the people you serve know/ think differently from before the intervention?</i>	<i>What will the people you serve do differently from before the intervention?</i>	<i>If you really got it right, what will be different in 10 years?</i>

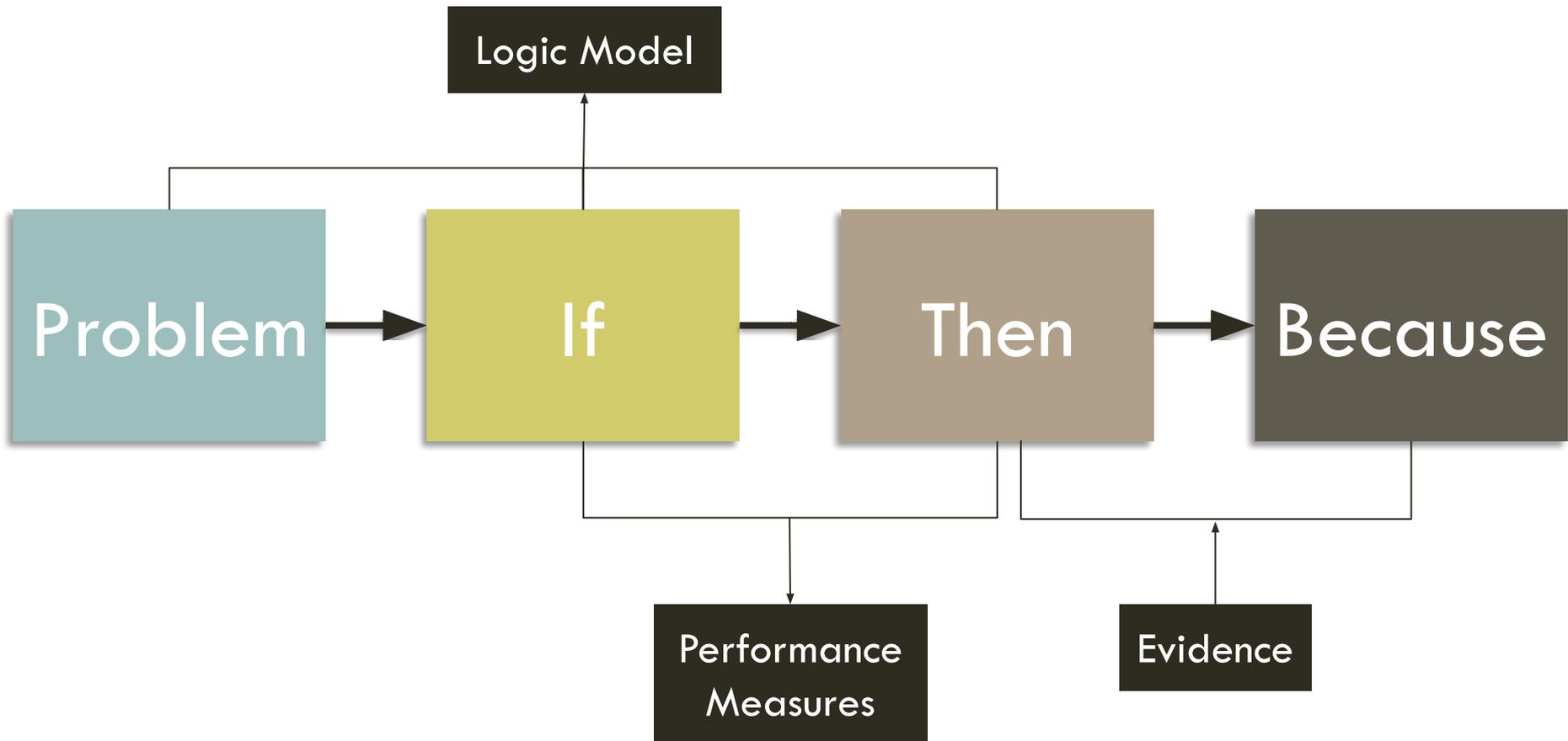
THEORY OF CHANGE VS. LOGIC MODEL

Feature	Theory of Change	Logic Model
Frame of reference	“What we want to achieve”	“What are we doing”
Questions answered	Why and how	What and when
Core components	Need/Problem Intervention Outcome	Input Activities Outcome
Format	Narrative	Graphic

BEST PRACTICES - Logic Model

- ✓ Use verbs/action-oriented language to describe activities.
- ✓ Include dosage (i.e., how much, how often) of activities.
- ✓ Correctly categorize outputs and outcomes.
- ✓ Match outputs and outcomes to the theory of change description.
- ✓ Match outputs and outcomes to performance measures.
- ✓ Organize rows of the logic model to clearly connect activities to expected outputs and outcomes.

KEY THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND...



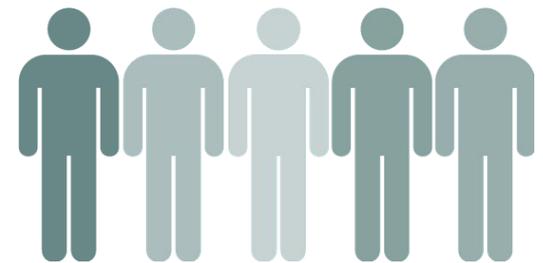
AMERICORPS PERFORMANCE MEASURE RULES

- At least 1 aligned performance measure (output paired with outcome) is required
- Allowable output/outcome pairs are specified
- Selectable performance measures are listed in the 2022 CNCS Performance Measures Instructions
- Must be aligned to the program's theory of change and logic model

TYPES OF AMERICORPS PERFORMANCE MEASURES

OUTPUTS

- Amount of service provided (*aligned with your theory of change and logic model*)
- Examples
 - People served
 - Products created
 - Programs developed



TYPES OF AMERICORPS PERFORMANCE MEASURES

OUTCOMES

- Reflect the changes or benefits that occur because of your AmeriCorps members' services (*aligned to your theory of change and logic model*)

Attitude/Belief	Knowledge/ Skill	Behavior	Condition
Thought, feeling	Understanding know-how	Action	Situation, circumstance

WHAT ARE THEY NOT?

Performance measures **do not** measure everything your program does.

- Your selected performance measures should be aligned to one or two **key** outcomes from your logic model and theory of change.

AMERICORPS PERFORMANCE MEASURE INSTRUCTIONS

HEALTHY FUTURES

Focus Area Notes

- Programs should only opt into the Healthy Futures performance measures if the measures reflect significant program activities aligned with the applicant’s core theory of change.
- All individuals counted under these measures must be program beneficiaries, not National Service Participants. National Service Participant outputs and outcomes should be reported in the Performance Data Elements in annual Progress Reports.
- Activities associated with these measures must be carried out by National Service Participants or by volunteers directly recruited and/or supported by National Service Participants.

H4A (output)	Number of individuals served
Definition of Key Terms	Individuals: recipients of CNCS-supported services related to improving health-related outcomes Served: substantive engagement of individuals with a specific health-related goal in mind. Cannot consist solely of mass dissemination of information such as email blasts, social media posts, or distributing pamphlets.
How to Measure/Collect Data	Tracking mechanism that ensures an unduplicated count of individuals who have received services

H9A (outcome)	Number of individuals who report improved capacity for independent living
Definition of Key Terms	Individuals: those reported in H4A, V1, V7A, or V8
How to Measure/Collect Data	Survey, interview, caseworker assessment, or other instrument capable of measuring changes in independent living capacity at the individual beneficiary level. When possible, pre-post assessments should be utilized.

Performance Measure:

Focus Area:	Objective:	No of MSY's:	No of Members:
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Problem Statement:

Selected Interventions:

Describe Interventions:

ED1A Output:

ED1A: Number of individuals served

Target:

Measured By:

Described Instrument:

ED23A Outcome:

ED23A: Number of children demonstrating gains in school readiness

Target:

Measured By:

Described Instrument:

AMERICORPS PERFORMANCE MEASURE INSTRUCTIONS

ED1A Output: _____

ED1A: Number of individuals served

Select from drop down

Target: _____

Measured By:

Described Instrument:

Target number from Theory of Change down

ED23A Outcome:

ED23A: Number of children demonstrating gains in school readiness

Target:

Measured By:

Described Instrument:

AMERICORPS PERFORMANCE MEASURE INSTRUCTIONS

ED1A Output:

ED1A: Number of individuals served

Target:

Measured By:

Described Instrument:

ED23A Outcome:

ED23A: Number of children demonstrating gains in school readiness

Target:

Measured By:

Described Instrument:

Estimate based on rationale in theory of change

AMERICORPS PERFORMANCE MEASURE INSTRUCTIONS

ED1A Output:

ED1A: Number of individuals served

Target:

Measured By:

Described Instrument:

ED23A Outcome:

ED23A: Number of children demonstrating gains in school readiness

Target:

Measured By:

Described Instrument:

Select your data collection method (how you obtain the data to inform the measure, e.g., student survey)

AMERICORPS PERFORMANCE MEASURE INSTRUCTIONS

ED1A Output:

ED1A: Number of individuals served

Target:

Measured By:

Described Instrument:

ED23A Outcome:

ED23A: Number of children demonstrating gains in sch

Target:

Measured By:

Described Instrument:

Provide details about your data collection method:

- Name of instrument
- What it will measure
- How it will be administered
- Reliability and validity information
- (For outcome) How much change is considered to be “improvement” or the like
- (For outcome) How the instrument will be used to measure change

BEST PRACTICES - Measures

- ✓ Select from the 2022 performance measures.
- ✓ Explain the target setting method (specify the target and how it was selected).
- ✓ Define all performance measure key terms (e.g., Improve)
- ✓ Develop clear, specific, and measurable applicant-determined performance measures that are not duplicated in the 2022 performance measures.
- ✓ Explain what instrument will be used and how it will be used to inform the performance measure.
- ✓ Plan how, when, where and who will collect/obtain your performance measure data and articulate it in your narrative
- ✓ Review Appendix B: Performance Measures Checklist

WRAP-UP

How are you feeling?
What did you take away?

RESOURCES

Notice of Funding Opportunity

<https://nj.gov/state/assets/pdf/volunteer/fy22-23-acnj-formula-nofo.pdf>

Performance Measurement Instructions

https://americorps.gov/sites/default/files/document/ASN_FY2022_PerformanceMeasuresInstructions_FINAL.508.pdf

Mandatory Supplemental Information

[https://americorps.gov/sites/default/files/document/ASN_FY2022_MandatorySupplementalInformation_FINAL.508.p
df](https://americorps.gov/sites/default/files/document/ASN_FY2022_MandatorySupplementalInformation_FINAL.508.pdf)

CREEHS CAN HELP!

We are happy to be a thought partner for your projects related to:

Program Design

- developing logic models/program theories
- specifying goals and objectives for projects

Performance Measurement

- operationalizing performance measures

Data Collection and Management and Analysis

- collecting and managing data for performance measures
- designing and implementing evaluations for their programs

Data Analysis and Reporting

- analyzing and interpreting data
- summarizing data and reporting findings

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