Getting Started With Program Evaluation
Companion Activity Packet

NATIONAL MENTORING RESOURCE CENTER
A Program of OJJDP

Overview

This packet contains companion handouts and activity templates for each chapter of the online module, "Getting Started With Program Evaluation," an introductory training for youth-mentoring programs developing or strengthening their program evaluation practices. As you go through each chapter of the module, you'll be prompted to review handouts or complete activities featured in this packet. Plan to spend 15 to 20 minutes engaging with each chapter, as well as additional time for reviewing and completing these additional materials.

Introduction

Why evaluate your mentoring program? Evaluation is an essential tool for building effective mentoring programs that truly make a difference. Evaluation is not a one-time activity — it is *a system* used to collect information that will help improve your program over time. Deciding what to evaluate starts with having a well defined *logic model*. This document maps out the outcomes you hope youth will achieve as a result of participating in your program. It also identifies the programmatic elements you implement to achieve those outcomes. Having a well-written logic model will help your program be able to measure three essential components of a comprehensive evaluation system for a youth mentoring program. These include being able to measure:

1. How well your program is being implemented
2. The strength of the relationship quality between your mentors and mentees
3. How mentees are working toward the intended outcomes of your program

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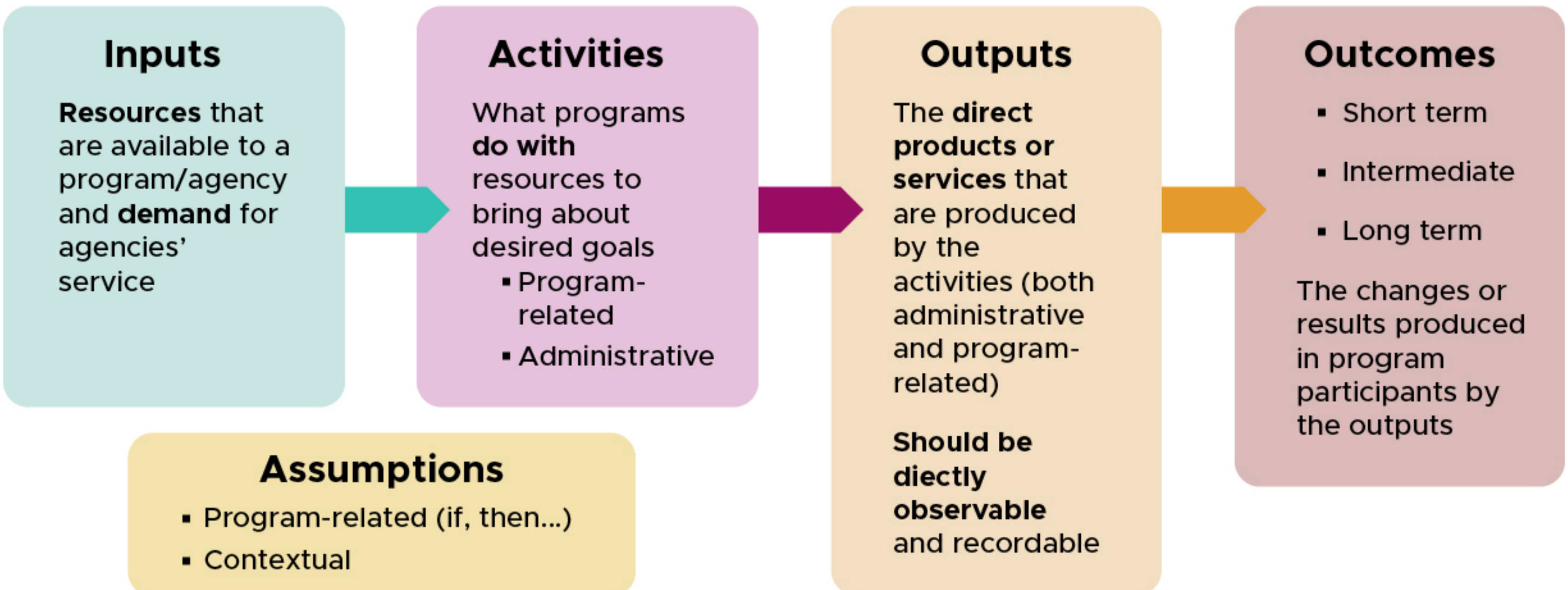
Chapter 1: Building a Logic Model

Logic Model Overview

A **logic model** is a graphical representation of how a program's resources and activities work toward creating an intended change. A **logic model** serves as a road map that can help programs like Super Scholars evaluate their program at multiple levels, including critical outcomes for youth.



Super Scholars: Logic Model Example

Inputs

- School concern about students with academic and behavioral challenges
- Half-time coordinator
- Teachers
- School staff members
- Six local business partners
- Two hours of available contact per student per week
- Program curriculum
- Volunteers from local businesses
- School space
- School performance records
- Relationship surveys

Activities

Leadership

- School planning meetings

Program Staff Members

- Mentor schedule coordination
- Mentor support and supervision calls/emails
- Mentor recruitment
- Mentor training
- Mentor survey
- Mentee survey
- End-of-year celebration

Participants

- Board games
- Sports and recreational activities
- Mindset “sparks” curriculum
- Study skills training
- Conflict management instruction
- Goal setting

Outputs

Administrative

- 45 mentors recruited
- 45 mentors complete two hours of training
- 45 students referred
- 45 mentees matched
- At least 40 relationship satisfaction surveys returned
- Mentors receive two contacts from supervisors per semester
- 45 mentors receive ongoing training

Program

- One hour of mentoring per session
- Two mentoring meetings per week
- Mentors spend 50 percent of the time on fun and recreational activities
- Mentors spend 50 percent of the time on the curriculum
- Mentors complete the curriculum
- Mentors complete one hour of ongoing training during the fall or spring semester

Outcomes

Short-Term

- Positive relationships with mentors
- Stronger academic-enabling skills
- Higher academic self-efficacy

Intermediate

- Improved mentee grades
- Strong motivation to attend college
- Better study skills

Long-Term

- School matriculation
- College attendance

Assumptions

- **IF** mentors receive at least two contacts from supervisors per semester, **THEN** they will be better equipped to address mentees’ needs.
- **IF** mentees and mentors meet at least two times a week, **THEN** they will be able to develop a rapport and a stronger relationship.
- Support for the program from volunteers and local businesses will continue to be available.

Logic Model Worksheet

Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Outcomes
			Short-Term:
			Intermediate:
			Long-Term:

Assumptions	
Program:	Contextual:

Chapter 2: Planning a Process Evaluation

Developing Process Evaluation Questions

A process evaluation helps determine whether your program is being implemented as intended. Put another way, when you take a closer look at your program in practice, are the activities and outputs from your logic model happening as they should be?

Planning a process evaluation starts with identifying key questions you'd like to answer about the activities, expected outputs, and assumptions you identified in your logic model. There are three main types of process questions to keep in mind: **consistency, participation,** and **quality**. For example, if a program had "Mentors complete one hour of ongoing training per semester" as an expected output, it could use the following sample questions related to consistency, participation, and quality to evaluate implementation of this output:

Type of Process Evaluation Question	Sample Question
Consistency: To what extent are program staff members and mentors implementing program components with the intended regularity and depth?	*What percentage of intended mentor trainings are conducted each semester?*
Participation: To what extent does each mentee or mentor take part in or receive the intended activities or experiences?	*What percentage of mentors completed one hour of ongoing training?*
Quality: To what degree is the program being implemented to a desired standard?	*What percentage of mentors found the ongoing training received from program staff members to be helpful or very helpful?*

Data Sources for Process Evaluation

Program Records

- Program records provide the simplest method of data collection — using data that are already available in existing program documents. Alternatively, program records can be generated by instituting new record-keeping procedures or policies.
- Ask the group for examples of program records that could be useful in a process evaluation. (As needed, point out examples, such as mentor activity logs, staff member implementation checklists, and attendance sheets from events.)
- Although this source is likely to cause the least disruption to the program, it may provide incomplete or poor-quality data. It may also be time-consuming (for example, if the data have to be manually extracted from participant case files).

Direct Observations

- Direct observation can provide valuable information about what really happens during activities.
- For example, direct observation can provide information about the extent and type of interactions between mentees and mentors during match activities or between staff members and mentors during match support contacts.
- This method can also be helpful in confirming participants' reports of activities.
- Data can be collected during direct observations using checklists or less structured methods that allow for more descriptive reporting of activities and behaviors.

Surveys and Interviews

- Surveys and interviews collect information directly from program participants (mentees, mentors, staff members, partners) using a standardized format.
- Participants complete surveys themselves. In interviews, participants provide oral responses to questions asked by an interviewer, who then records the responses.
- Both closed- and open-ended questions can be used in surveys and interviews.
  - Closed-ended questions are formatted to limit the answer choices.
  - Open-ended questions allow for more descriptive responses.
- A program may develop its own survey or interview questions (this would be most appropriate when asking questions that are specific to the program) or use questions from surveys with evidence of reliability and validity (this would be most appropriate when assessing more complex concepts, such as mentoring relationship quality).
  - Reliability refers to the degree to which a respondent will respond the same way each time the questions are administered.
  - Validity refers to the extent to which the questions actually measure what they intend to measure.

- External measures are also better suited for assessing more complex concepts, such as mentoring relationship quality.
- Surveys can easily be administered to a large group of participants; offer participants anonymity; and be collected in person, online, over the phone, or via mail.
- Interviews, on the other hand, require more time and resources to conduct.
- Surveys and interviews may be implemented once (for example, an intake survey at the time a youth is enrolled in a mentoring program to get information on their demographic and background characteristics) or more than once (for example, midpoint and end-of-program surveys of youth satisfaction with the program).

Focus Groups

- Focus groups allow for the collection of qualitative data from a small group of participants.
- They can be an efficient way to collect information from multiple people in a short period of time.
- They require a trained focus group facilitator to guide the discussion.
- Focus group sessions may be audio-recorded and/or use a note taker (an individual other than the facilitator) to ensure relevant information is not missed.

Tips for Collecting Process Data

Using new or existing data. Most mentoring programs already collect some information that can be used in a process evaluation. During the evaluation-planning phase, it is important to assess the availability and quality of existing data. Although it can be less expensive and time-consuming to use existing data, using new data may provide greater opportunity to tailor measures and procedures to the questions that are of greatest interest. Existing data collection practices and procedures can also be improved to collect more useful evaluation data.

Sampling. It may not be possible for a program to collect process evaluation data from all participants (for example, all mentors). Instead, a program may collect information from a portion or sample of participants. In doing so, however, programs should attempt to select participants randomly (by chance) so that the findings are representative of the entire group of participants.

Ensuring data completeness. To minimize bias and distortion in your process evaluation, it is critical to structure data collection for high rates of completeness. It is important that you begin the evaluation process by engaging all stakeholders to explain the purpose of and rationale for the evaluation. Building data-collecting and reporting activities into staff members' responsibilities will also improve the completeness of data from program records. Additionally, in collecting evaluation data from participants (mentees, mentors, staff members, partners), take advantage of available windows of opportunity (e.g., program events, match support calls), use online platforms when feasible (e.g., SurveyMonkey), ensure anonymity or confidentiality of data when possible, and provide incentives for participation in data collection efforts.

Use multiple sources of information. Whenever possible, use multiple sources of data. For example, in assessing mentoring relationship quality, gathering survey information from both mentees and mentors is generally recommended. Data gathered from multiple sources can then be compared and integrated (a process sometimes referred to as "triangulation of data") and will generally prove more informative and credible than information gathered from any one source.

Sensitive/personal information. If you will be collecting sensitive or personal information from program participants (mentees, mentors, staff members), be sure you have established safeguards for maintaining the security of the data. Most internal evaluations (those done for program improvement and not disseminated outside of the organization) do not require institutional review board (IRB) review. (An IRB is an administrative body that oversees and monitors an organization's rules and policies related to research ethics. For more information on what constitutes research that requires IRB approval, go to https://research.uic.edu/human-subjects-irbs/.) Regardless of whether your evaluation requires IRB review, it is always important to protect participants' privacy and confidentiality.

Sample Plan for Gathering Process Data

Type of Question	Example Questions	Potential Data Sources	Frequency/Timing
Consistency	*What proportion of mentors completed criminal and motor vehicle background checks before meeting with youth?*	Program records, implementation checklist	Semiannually (program midpoint and end)
	What percentage of expected content was covered in mentor training sessions?	Program records, mentor survey, direct observation	Monthly, quarterly, program end, semiannually
Participation	*What percentage of mentors participated in a pre-service training session?*	Program records, attendance sheets, implementation checklist, mentor survey	Semiannually (program midpoint and end)
	What percentage of mentees attended at least 70 percent of mentoring sessions?	Program records, implementation checklist, attendance sheets, mentor survey, youth survey	Semiannually (program midpoint and end)
Quality	*How do mentors perceive the quality of support they receive from program staff members?*	Mentor survey, focus group	Program midpoint or end
	How do mentees perceive the quality of their relationship with their mentor?	Youth survey, focus group	Semiannually (program midpoint and end)

Process Evaluation Planning Worksheet

Conducting a process evaluation requires organizational buy-in and contribution. To help discuss and outline your plans for conducting a process evaluation, consider completing the following planning worksheet with program staff members and leaders.

Evaluation Question	Data Collection Tools and Method(s)	Timing	Dissemination
What are you measuring (e.g., number of match support calls per month)?	What tool(s) and method(s) will be used to collect data?	What is the frequency of this data collection effort?	How will the findings be shared and used?

Chapter 3: Measuring Relationship Quality

Assessing Mentoring Relationships

Nakkula and Harris[1] propose a framework for how to think about measuring the quality of mentoring relationships:

- **Internal match quality:** How do the mentor and mentee feel about their relationship and each other?
  - Relational aspects (perceptions of compatibility, feelings of closeness, trust, satisfaction)
  - Instrumental aspects (degree-of-growth orientation, frequency of support received)
- **Match structure:** How do the mentor and mentee decide what to do and what types of activities to engage in?
- **External match quality:** How do outside elements (e.g., perceived program support, degree of family engagement in the match) affect the development of the mentoring relationship?

[1] Nakkula, M., & Harris, J. (2014). Assessing mentoring relationships. In D. Dubois & M. Karcher (Eds.), *Handbook of youth mentoring* (2nd ed., pp. 45-62). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Chapter 4: Planning an Outcome Evaluation

Identifying Instruments to Measure Youth Outcomes

Activity Instructions:

Review your logic model and identify research-based measures for a few of the outcomes you would want to evaluate.

1. Review the outcomes you identified in your logic model.
2. Transfer three to five of your outcomes to the **Outcome Evaluation Planning Worksheet** (found on page 13). If you have more than five outcomes in a given category (e.g., short-term), start by listing the five you are most interested in measuring.
3. For each outcome, identify a potential measure. For example, if an outcome is academic achievement, possible measures could be mentees' self-reported grades (there is a good measure of this type in the toolkit) or, if feasible, mentees' actual report cards.

    To find research-based instruments to measure outcomes, review the National Mentoring Resource Center's Measurement Guidance Toolkit. Here, you can find recommended instruments for measuring key youth outcomes in mentoring programs from the following categories:

    1. Mental and Emotional Health
    2. Social and Emotional Skills
    3. Healthy and Prosocial Behavior
    4. Problem Behavior
    5. Interpersonal Relationships
    6. Academics
    7. Risk and Protective Factors

4. For each measure, think about how and when you could collect this data and how you would plan to share and evaluate your findings.

Outcome Evaluation Planning Worksheet

Outcome From Your Logic Model	Data Measurement Tools	Timing	Dissemination
	What specific measurement tool could you use to measure progress toward this outcome?	What is the frequency of this data collection effort?	How will the findings be shared and used?

Chapter 5: Strengthening Your Evaluation Practices

Identifying Next Steps

Before beginning program evaluation work (and especially before evaluating program outcomes), consider your organization's capacity and identify some steps you could take or resources you could seek out to strengthen your evaluation practices.

Section of Training	Key Next Steps	Person/People Responsible	Resources or Support Needed	Timeline for Completion
Building our logic model	1.			
	2.			
	3.			
Planning a process evaluation for our program	1.			
	2.			
	3.			

Section of Training	Key Next Steps	Person/People Responsible	Resources or Support Needed	Timeline for Completion
Measuring relationship quality in our program	1.			
	2.			
	3.			
Planning an outcome evaluation for our program	1.			
	2.			
	3.			