Logic Model and Theory of Change Template

A logic model shows, on one page, how your resources and activities lead to results. A theory of change explains why each step should lead to the next and what must be true along the way. Used together, they give funders the what and the why of your program.

WHO IT IS FOR	WHEN TO USE IT	TIME NEEDED
Program designers, proposal writers, and MEL (monitoring, evaluation, and learning) staff	While shaping a program or a proposal, and at each annual review	Two to three hours for a first version, then refine

The building blocks in plain words

Problem statement	The specific condition the program sets out to change, for whom, and where.
Inputs	What you put in: staff, partners, money, facilities, data, and time.
Activities	What the program does with those inputs.
Outputs	The direct, countable products of activities, such as sessions held or people trained. Outputs show that you delivered; they do not yet show change.
Short-term outcomes	Early changes in knowledge, skills, attitudes, or access, usually seen within the program period.
Medium-term outcomes	Changes in behavior, practice, or conditions that build on the short-term outcomes. Some funders call these intermediate outcomes.
Impact	The long-term, wider change the program contributes to, usually alongside other actors and influences.
Assumptions	Conditions that must hold for one level to lead to the next. If an assumption fails, the chain breaks.
Risks	Events or conditions that could stop the program working, each with a likelihood, an impact, and a planned response.
External factors	The wider context outside your control, such as policy, the economy, or other programs, that can help or hinder results.

How to build it

1. Write the problem statement first. Keep your solution out of it.
2. Work from right to left: agree the impact and outcomes before you list activities and inputs.
3. Test each link with an "if, then" sentence. If we deliver these outputs, then will these outcomes follow? If the answer is "only if," you have found an assumption.
4. Write the assumptions between levels, and turn the most fragile ones into risks with a response.
5. Keep the logic model to one page. Put detail in the narrative and the MEL plan.

Template: logic model

	Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Short-term outcomes	Medium-term outcomes	Impact
Problem statement	Write the problem statement here: what condition, for whom, and where.					
Our program						
Assumptions to the next level						

Tip: draw arrows only where you can explain the link. Indicators for each level go in your MEL table (R04). If your funder uses a logframe, carry these assumptions into its assumptions column.

Theory of change statement

If we (activities) for (who), then (short-term outcomes), which will lead to (medium-term outcomes), because (key assumptions). Over time, this contributes to (impact).

External factors that could help or hinder results

Risks and responses

Risk	Which link it affects	Likelihood (L, M, H)	Impact (L, M, H)	Planned response	Owner

WORKED MINI EXAMPLE

Brightwater Reading Trust: logic model for after-school reading clubs

All names, places, and figures in this example are invented for illustration.

	Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Short-term outcomes	Medium-term outcomes	Impact
Problem statement	Many children aged 8 to 11 at two partner schools read below grade level and get little small-group reading support.					
Our program	Two club coordinators, 30 trained volunteers, school rooms, reading books, assessment tools, and an MEL officer for part of the week	Recruit and train volunteers; run twice-weekly reading clubs; assess reading each term; hold parent reading evenings	12 clubs running each term; children attending at least 70 percent of sessions; termly assessments completed; four parent evenings held	Children read more fluently and with more confidence; parents read with children at home more often	More children reach grade-level reading benchmarks; teachers refer children earlier	Children in the district complete primary school with the reading skills they need to keep learning
Assumptions to the next level	Schools keep rooms available after class	Volunteers stay for at least one school year	Children attend regularly enough to benefit	Gains in fluency carry over into class work	Schools continue to use club data in their planning	Other services, such as schools and libraries, support the same goal

External factors: school calendar changes, other reading programs in the district, and family income pressures in harvest months.

Theory of change: If we run small reading clubs with trained volunteers for children who are behind, then they will read more fluently and with more confidence. That will help more of them reach grade-level benchmarks, because they get more practice and feedback than class time allows. Over time, this contributes to more children completing primary school with strong reading skills.

Risk	Which link it affects	Likelihood (L, M, H)	Impact (L, M, H)	Planned response	Owner
Volunteers leave during the school year	Activities to outputs	M	M	Keep a reserve list and run a short mid-year training	Club coordinator
Attendance drops in harvest months	Outputs to short-term outcomes	H	H	Agree the club calendar with parents and shift sessions to market days	Program lead

Quality check before you share it

Check	Done
Each outcome describes a change in people, practice, or systems, not an activity.	☐
Each output links to at least one outcome, and each outcome traces back to an activity.	☐
The impact is something the program contributes to, not something it claims to achieve alone.	☐
Assumptions are specific enough to check during the program.	☐
Every major risk has a response and an owner.	☐
Program, finance, and MEL staff have reviewed and agreed the model with partners.	☐

Common mistakes to avoid

- **Activities dressed up as outcomes.** "Train 30 volunteers" is an activity. "Volunteers use the reading method with confidence" is an outcome.
- **A leap from outputs to impact.** If nothing sits between "sessions held" and "lifelong learning," the logic has a gap a reviewer will see.
- **Assumptions nobody can check.** "The community supports the program" is too vague. "Parents allow children to stay after school twice a week" can be tested.
- **A model only the writer understands.** If program staff cannot explain it in two minutes, simplify it.
- **A model that never changes.** Revisit it at each annual review and update it when the evidence changes.

Want a second pair of eyes before you submit?

Edit Right Advisors is a grant writing and advisory firm. We help nonprofits and NGOs win funding and grow their impact. We can screen an opportunity with you, shape the program logic, build your MEL (monitoring, evaluation, and learning) plan, or review a full draft so that every part holds together.

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Sources and credits

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Kidder DP, Fierro LA, Luna E, et al. CDC Program Evaluation Framework, 2024. MMWR Recommendations and Reports 2024;73(6), see the step on describing the program: https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/73/rr/rr7306a1.htm.

All accessed October 27, 2026. The template, definitions, and example are original Edit Right Advisors material. They use the standard results-chain terms and the practice of planning backward from outcomes described in these sources.

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