Being Logical about Outcome Evaluation

What is Outcome Evaluation?

- Understanding a program's:
  - Impacts
  - Benefits
  - Changes

- Outcome evaluation can examine these changes in outcomes in the
  - Short-term
  - Intermediate-term
  - Long-term

Why is Outcome Evaluation important?

- There are decreasing funds for nonprofits with increasing community needs. Thus, there is more focus on whether nonprofit programs are really making a difference.
- Previous evaluation measures focused upon how much money was spent, number of people served and client satisfaction. These measures don't really assess impacts on clients or areas of desired impact.
- Outcomes evaluation looks at impacts or benefits to desired areas of change during and after program activities are implemented.
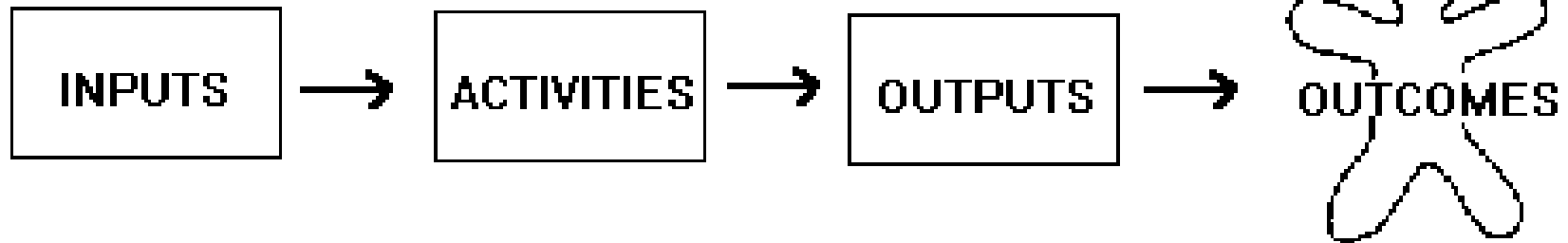
Logic Model Defined

The program logic model is defined as a picture of how your organization does its work – the theory and assumptions underlying the program. A program logic model **_links_** outcomes (both short-term and long-term) with program activities/processes and the theoretical assumptions/principles of the program.

- W.K. Kellogg Foundation

Logic Model

- A logic model is a <u>diagram</u> of common elements, showing what a program is supposed to do, with whom and why.

- <u>Graphic representation</u> of the what is invested, what is done, and what results.

- Common elements include:
  - Inputs
  - Activities
  - Outputs
  - Outcomes
  - Outcome Indicators
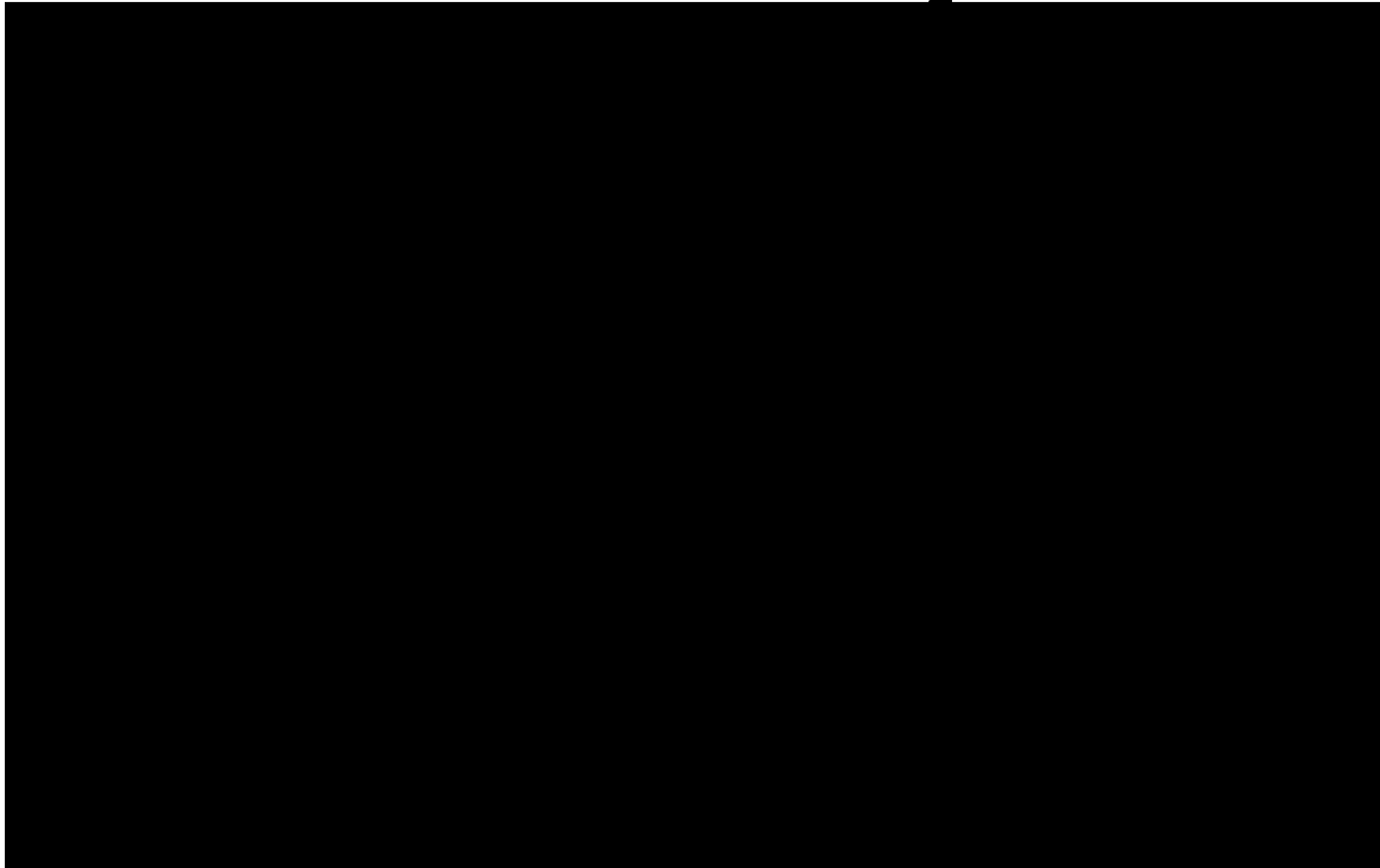
Program Outcome Model

INPUTS	→	ACTIVITIES	→	OUTPUTS	→	OUTCOMES
Resources dedicated to or consumed by the program		What the program does with the inputs to fulfill its mission		The direct products of program activities		Benefits for participants during and after program activities

SOURCE: United Way

"I think you should be more explicit here in Step Two."

Logic Model cont.

- **Inputs** – These are materials and resources that the program uses in its activities, or processes, to serve clients, or run programs. Such inputs include
  - Equipment
  - Staff
  - Volunteers
  - Facilities
  - Money
- These are often easy to identify and many of the inputs seem common to many organizations and programs.

Logic Model cont.

- **Activities** – These are the activities, or processes, that the program undertakes in order to meet the participants' needs or run a program. Examples include
  - Educating
  - Group work
  - Mentoring
  - Relationship-building
  - Organizing
- Note that when identifying the activities in a program, the focus is still the organization or program itself, and is not so much on actual changes the program tries to accomplish.

Logic Model cont.

- **Outputs** – These are the units of service regarding the program. For example, the
  - Number of people taught, mentored, organized, etc,..
  - Number of people served, books published, etc.
  - Number of handouts distributed
  - Number of homes canvassed
- Outputs usually do not indicate anything about the actual impacts/benefits/changes desired from the program.
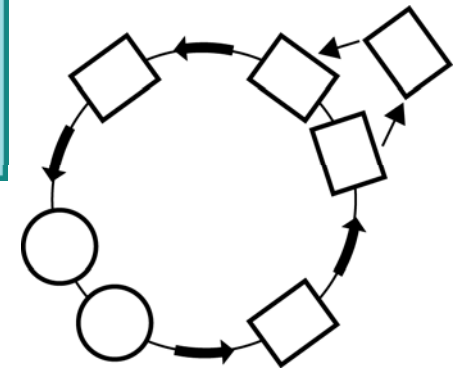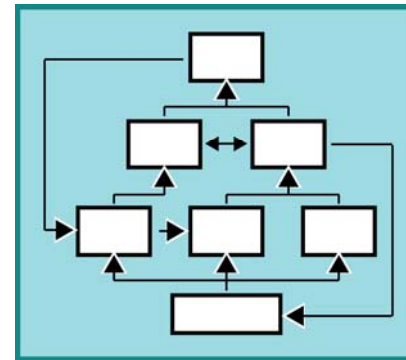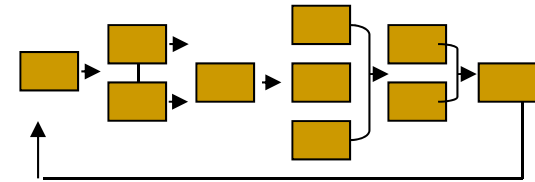
Logic Model cont.

- **Outcomes** – These are actual impacts, benefits, or changes the program tries to accomplish.
- For example, in a smoking cessation program, an outcome might be "participants quit smoking."
- Changes, or outcomes, are usually expressed in terms of:
  - *Knowledge and skills* (these are often considered to be short-term outcomes)
  - *Values and attitudes*, conditions and status (these are often considered to be short- or long-term outcomes depending)
  - *Behaviors* (these are often considered to be long-term outcomes)

Logic Model cont.

- **Outcome Indicators** – Indicators answer the "how do we know we are achieving success in our program." These are things that can be:
  - ❑ Seen
  - ❑ Heard
  - ❑ Read
- Indicators are observable and measurable "milestones" toward an outcome target.
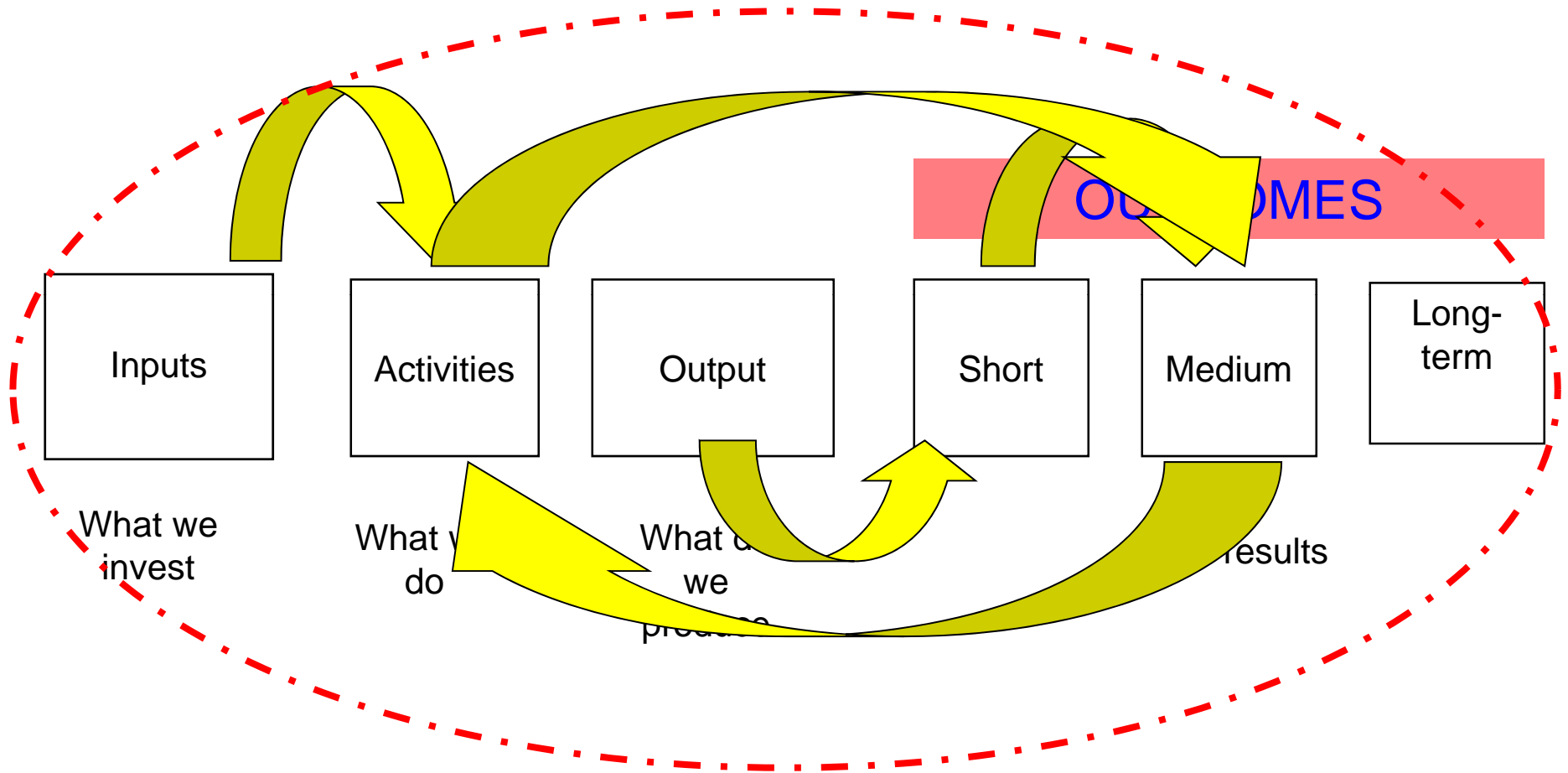
What does a logic model look like?

- Graphic display of boxes and arrows; vertical or horizontal
  - Relationships, linkages
- Any shape possible
  - Circular, dynamic
  - Cultural adaptations; storyboards
- Level of detail
  - Simple
  - Complex
- Multiple models

Programs are not linear!

Inputs	Activities	Output	Short	Medium	Long-term

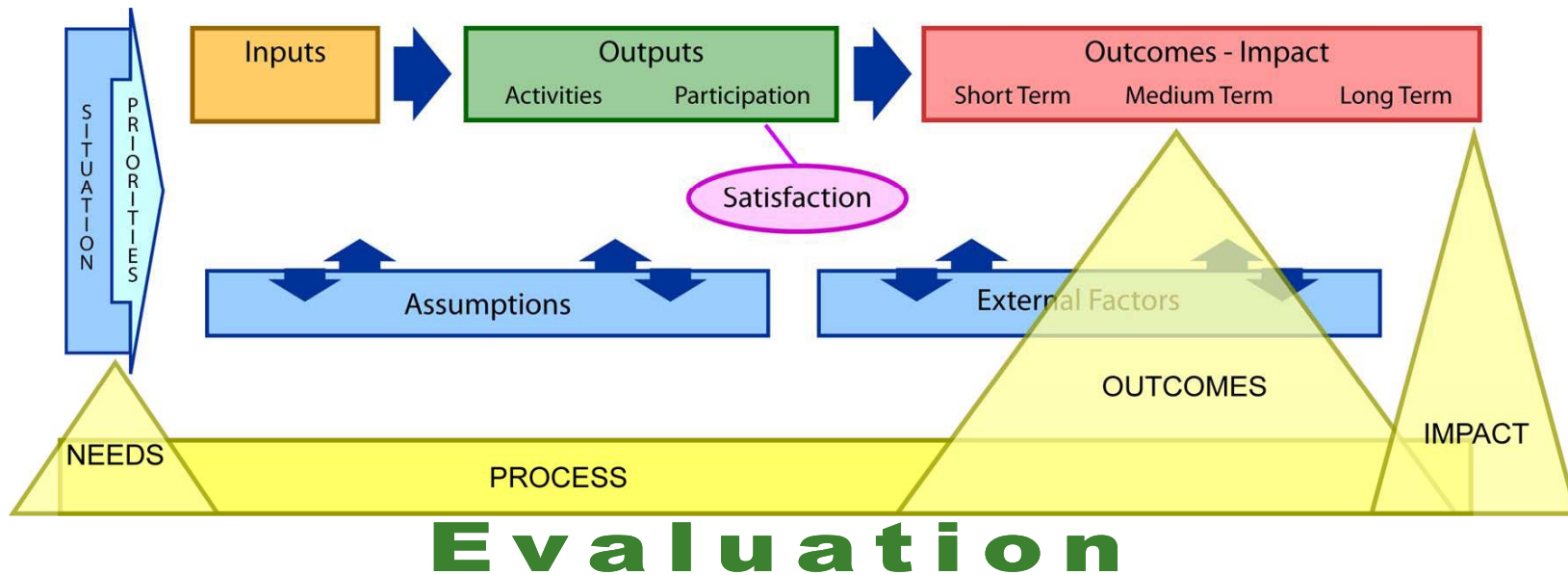What we invest   What we do   What we produce   results

OUTCOMES

What logic model is not…

- A theory
- Reality
- An evaluation model or method

It is a framework for describing the relationships between investments, activities and results.

It provides a common approach for integrating planning, implementation, evaluation and reporting.

Logic model and evaluation

Needs/asset assessment:

What are the characteristics, needs, priorities of priority population?

What are potential barriers/facilitators?

What is most appropriate?

Process evaluation:

How is program implemented? Fidelity of implementation?

Are activities delivered as intended?

Are participants being reached as intended?

What are participant reactions?

Outcome evaluation:

To what extent are desired changes occurring? For whom?

Is the program making a difference?

What seems to work? Not work?

What are unintended outcomes?

Applications

- More Logic Model Examples (handout)

- Logic Model Scramble (game)

- Logic Model Worksheets (small groups)

Measuring Outcomes cont.

- **Outcomes** are usually too broad to enable data collection tools to be developed directly from them.

- Remember, the purpose of outcomes is to describe the intended impact the participant experiences.

- For this reason, **indicators** are used to serve as a bridge between intended outcomes and the actual data collection process.

Measuring Outcomes cont.

- The next phase in putting together an effective outcome measurement system focuses on deciding how you are going to make your intended outcomes **measurable.**

- That is, defining a set of **indicators** and identifying the data collection **methods** to gather information about these indicators.

Measuring Outcomes cont.

- Indicators must be **specific** and **observable**. They answer questions like:
  - How will you know when changes have occurred?
  - How will know when you have achieved the outcomes?
- Thinking ahead to possible data collection methods will tell you if your indicators are specific enough.

Outcome Indicators Example

Type of Program	Outcome	Outcome Indicator
Counseling for parents identified as at risk for child abuse or neglect	No confirmed incidents of child abuse or neglect.	# and % of participating families with no confirmed child abuse or neglect during cases 12 months post-program
Counseling for parents identified as at risk for child abuse or neglect	Risk factors decrease.	Post-test scores on risk assessment show fewer abuse and neglect behaviors compared to pre-test

Outcome Indicators Example cont.

Type of Program	Outcome	Outcome Indicator
Camping	Youth expand survival related knowledge.	Post-test scores are higher on knowledge questionnaire compared to pre-test
Tutorial program for 6th grade students	Students' academic performance improves.	# and % of participants who earn better grades in the grading period post-program

Indicators

- Here are some things to consider as you prioritize your indicators:
  - Select indicators for which you can get the data
  - Select the indicator that is most useful to you and gives you the most useful information about the outcome
  - Select the indicator that is most feasible for staff to measure within the time and money resources available to you

Note about Methods

- Outcome evaluation methods are mostly **quantitative** (numbers) because of **causal inference**.
- One of things you are trying to demonstrate is that your program **caused** the desired change.
- Quantitative methods (numbers) are more effective in making the causal link between your program and change than qualitative methods (word).
- Qualitative methods (words) can be used with quantitative methods (numbers) to increase understanding.

Parenting Class Example

- A parenting class pre- and post-test had 20 knowledge related questions about parenting

- On the pre-test participants scored 13

- On the post-test participants scored 13

- When asked an open-ended question, "Did you learn anything new from this class?" 100% said yes and listed some topics