



New outreach projects can be exciting, especially when the project team has innovative ideas for achieving outreach or has a wave of enthusiasm for a new community partnership. Evaluation, believe it or not, can add to the excitement if it is done correctly.

If evaluation is planned and conducted systematically throughout the project, it can provide information for self-reflection and project improvement. Evaluation also can help you provide compelling evidence of effectiveness of a well-done project, which is of interest to all stakeholders in your project. (A stakeholder is defined as anyone who has some form of investment or “stake” in the project). You will be able to take full advantage of these benefits if you include evaluation in your project plan from the beginning.

As you develop your project strategy, evaluation should be a key component. To design an evaluation plan, you first must identify the result (outcomes) you want to

achieve. You must determine what activities, services, and products will help you achieve the desired outcomes. You also should list the resources that you will need to conduct the activities and to produce the products and services (outputs) that will lead to your desired outcomes.

You can think of these project components—resources, activities, outputs, and outcomes—as building blocks for your project and its evaluation. One tool for assembling these building blocks is known as a “logic model.” A logic model is a one-page table that shows how the outcomes you want your program to achieve are linked to the resources, activities, and outputs needed to achieve them. You can also think of logic models as road maps that show your anticipated destination and how you expect to arrive there. With this map to work with, you can use evaluation throughout the project to help you stay on the chosen road and make course corrections as needed. Then, in the end, you will be able to assess whether or not you made it to your destination.