

# Logic Models & Theory of Change

**Summer Institute in Evaluation, 2026**

Presented by: *Bohdanna Kinasevych (she/her), MSc, CE*

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By the end of this session:

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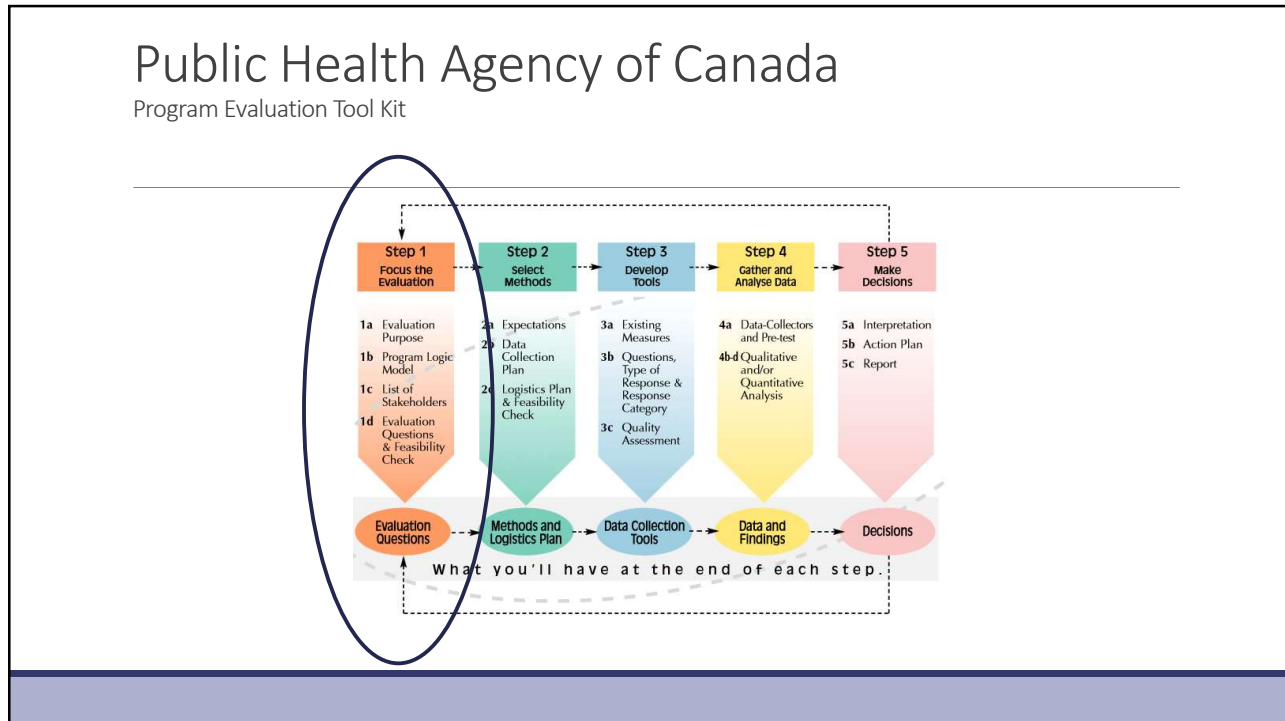
What is a Logic Model?

What is a Theory of Change?

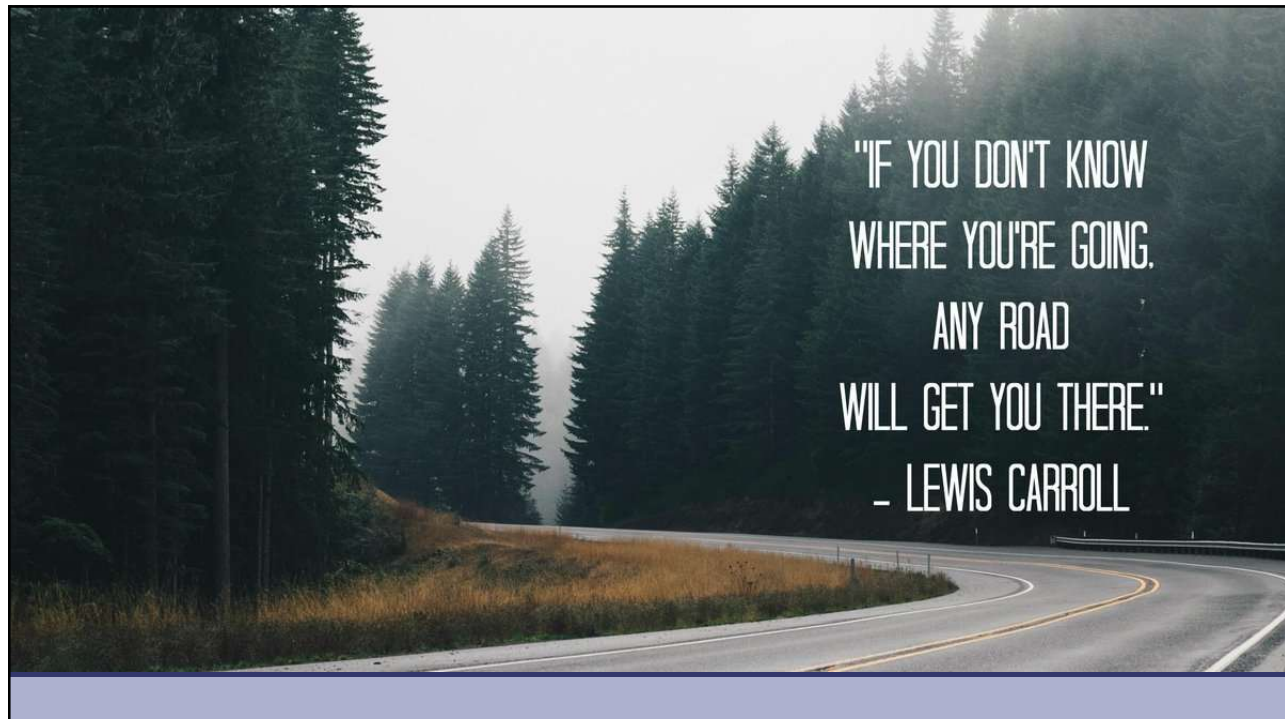
What are the similarities and differences between them?

Why do they matter?

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## Logic Model & Theory of Change

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*"If you don't know where you're going, how are you gonna' know when you get there?"*

– Yogi Berra

**A strong, thoughtful theory of change (ToC) is used to inform a logic model. It is the 'logic' piece of the logic model.**

- ToCs explain the rationale around how change is expected to happen.
- Logic models outline the specific activities a program will take to achieve its goals.

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### **Theory of Change (The science)**

*Explains **why** it works and how to fix it when it doesn't.*

### **Logic Model (The recipe)**

*Tells you **what** to do.*



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A logic model describes a **logical sequence showing what the intervention's intended outcomes are**: If we provide X, the result will be Y

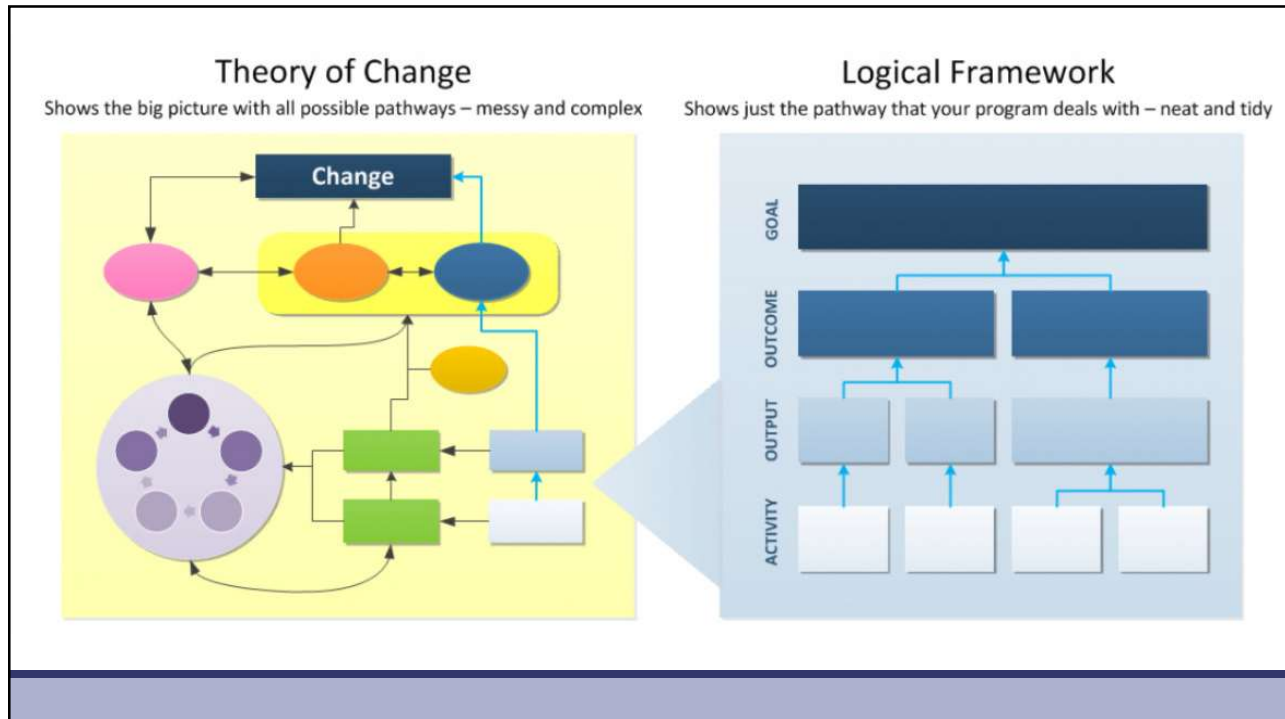
*If we distribute sterile needles and provide safe disposal at community sites, then people who inject drugs have access to clean equipment and safe needle disposal.*

A theory of change includes **causal mechanisms to show why** each intervention component is expected to result in the intended outcomes: If we provide X, A will support (or hinder) a result of Y.

*If we distribute sterile needles and provide safe disposal at community sites, then access to clean equipment reduces needle-sharing, which lowers transmission of HIV and hepatitis C, leading to better health outcomes for people who inject drugs and reduced infectious disease burden in the community.*

<https://cere.olemiss.edu/logic-models-vs-theories-of-change/>

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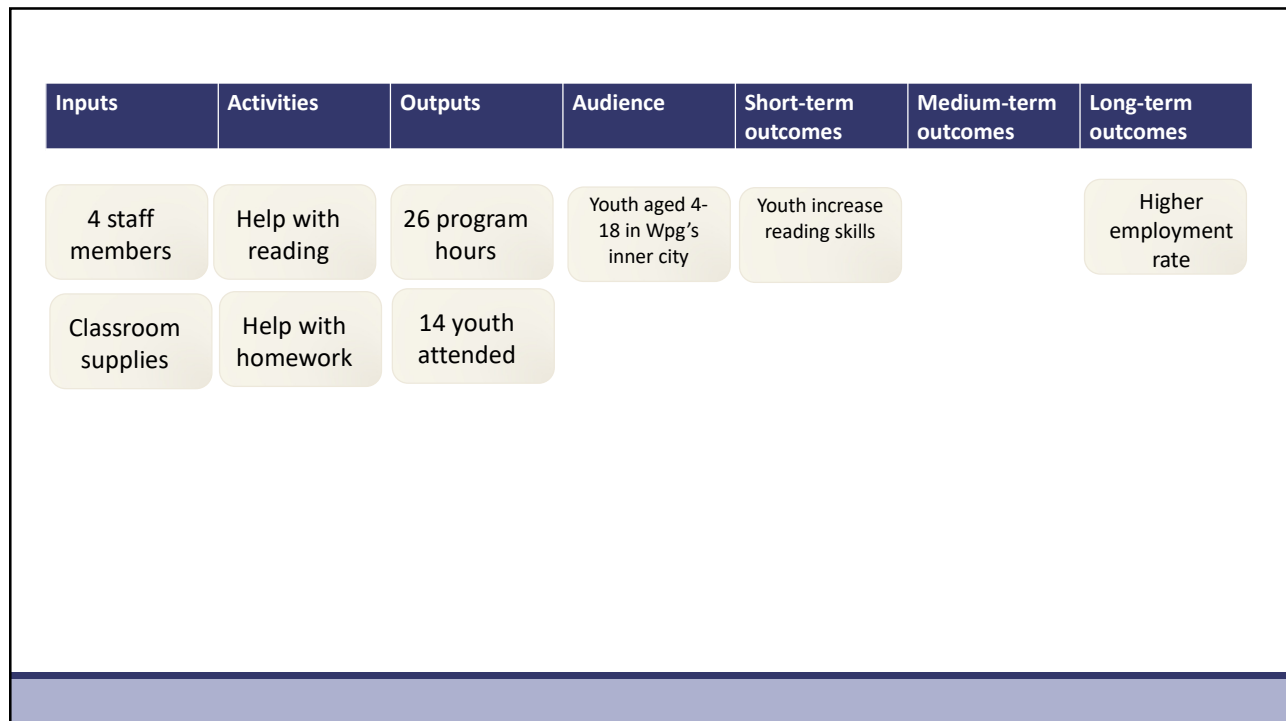


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## Logic Model - definitions

Inputs (What we invest)	Activities (What we do)	Outputs (What we measure)	Audience (Who we reach)	Outcomes (The benefits)
The resources a program uses to achieve the desired outcomes	Main tasks of the program staff/volunteers directed to beneficiaries	Direct products of a program which can be counted	Individuals affected by the program	The desired short-, medium-, and long-term changes that occur as a result
Staff, volunteers, time, money, research, materials, equipment, technology, and partners	Conduct workshops, deliver services, develop products/resources , train, provide counseling, assess, facilitate, partner	Number of people served, hours of service provided, product created	Participants, clients, agencies, decision-makers, customers	Knowledge and skills gained, attitudes, beliefs and behaviours changed, problems addressed

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# Evaluation plan

PROGRAM NAME: ABC Homework Club									
Program Plan				Outcome Plan			Evaluation Plan		
#	INPUTS	ACTIVITIES	OUTPUTS	TARGET GROUP	SHORT TERM	MEDIUM TERM	LONG TERM	PERFORMANCE INDICATOR(S)	MEASUREMENT TOOL(S)
1.	- 4 staff members - 3 volunteers - 52 combined work hours - \$435 - Books - Pens/ Pencils - Computer	- help with homework - help with reading - provide guidance with homework	- 14 youth attended - 13 program sessions - 26 program hours	- Youth aged 4-18 in Winnipeg's inner city	- Youth will have increased reading skills		- Higher probability of employment due to education	- Youth attending the program have difficulty reading a book at grade level 1 on first day of program, but grade level 3 on last day - Youth report that reading is easier for them	- Record of difficulty of books child is reading - Self-report

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## What to Consider for a Theory of Change

1. Start with your values
2. Concentrate on your primary goal
3. Focus on the positive
4. Make it inclusive and accessible
5. Be open and prepared to unlearn

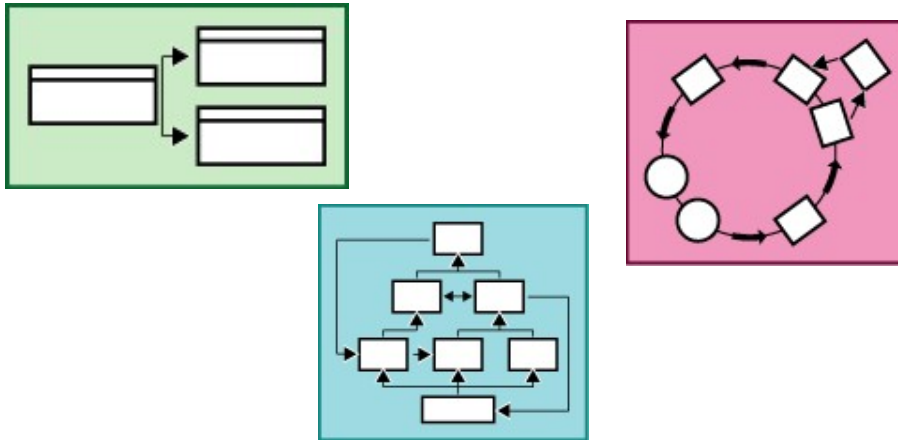
Also consider...

- Complex systems (e.g., social, economic, political etc.)
- Multiple pathways

<https://makeway.org/in-the-news/key-lessons-in-developing-a-collaborative-theory-of-change/>

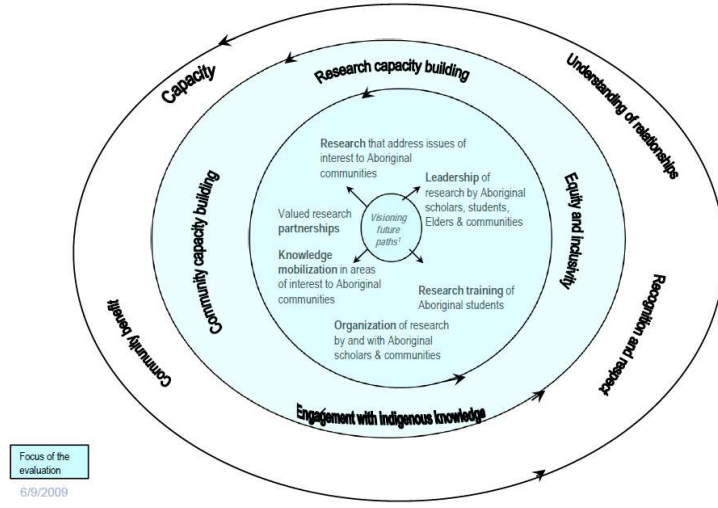
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# What does a Logic Model look like?



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## SSHRC's Aboriginal Research Program Logic Model - Circle Version



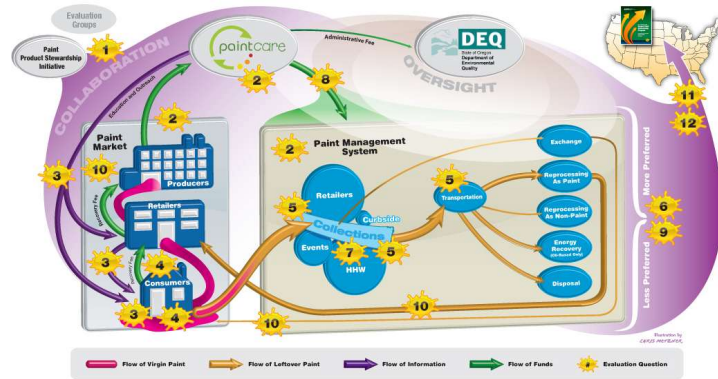
Focus of the evaluation  
6/9/2009

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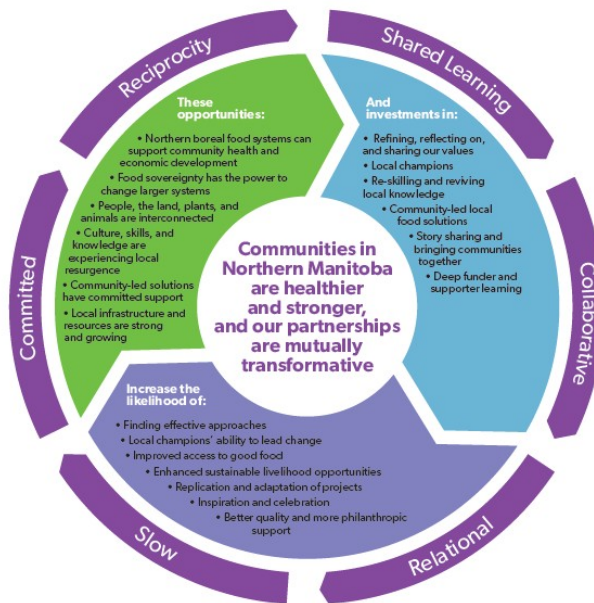
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# What does a ToC look like?

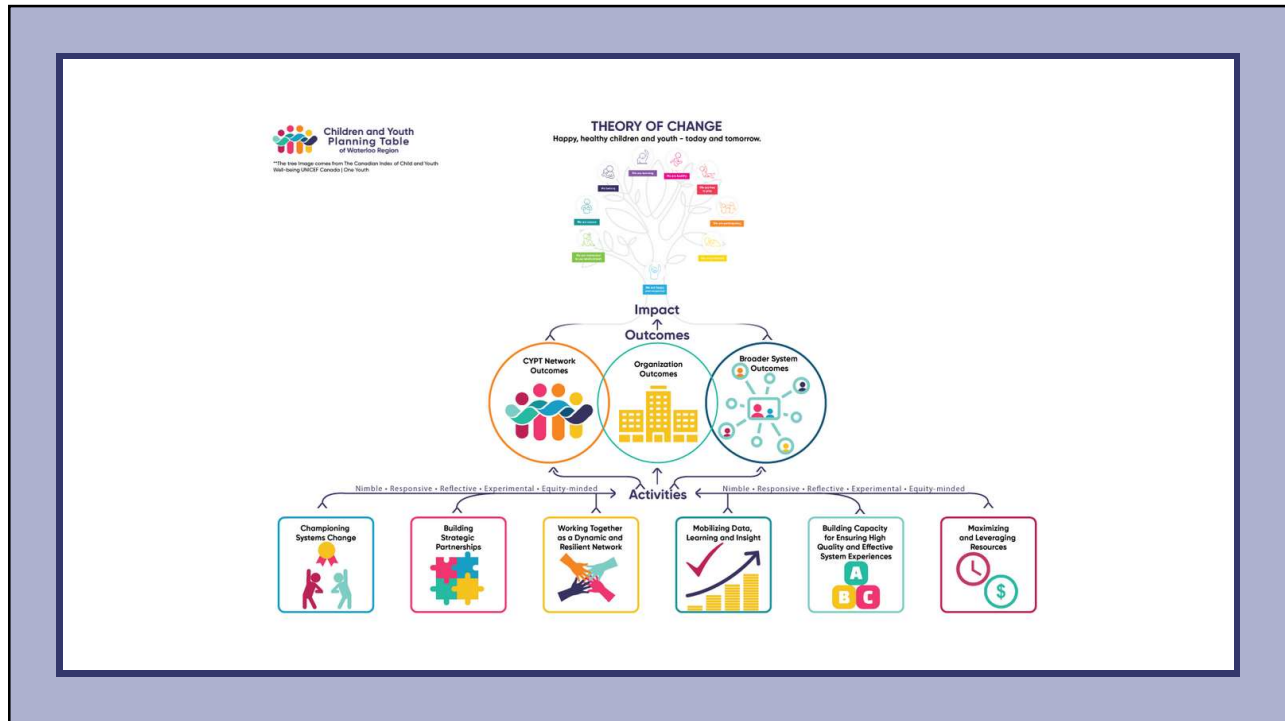
<http://www.paintstewardshipprogram.com/>



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## Advantages

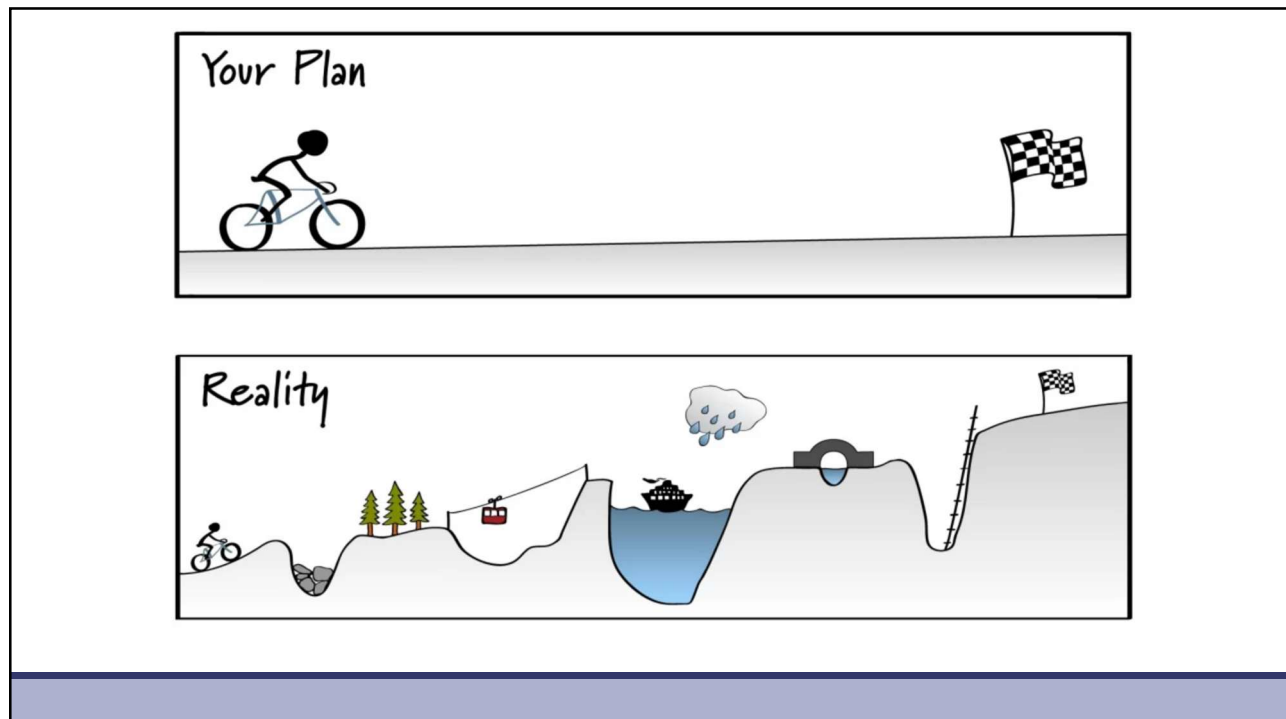
- Supports program design, and guides program implementation
- Clarifies assumptions staff may have
- Shows relationship between activities and outcomes
- Explains how the program will achieve its results to funders and other stakeholders
- Clarifies expectations, and allows for planning of evaluation activities

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Challenges

- Can be time-consuming, tedious to develop and reach consensus
- A 'living' document that needs to be updated periodically
- A 'snapshot' of the program – can be difficult to decide what to include
- Represents an idealistic situation, not always reality

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## Why are Logic Models and ToCs helpful?



Clarifying your purpose



Articulating what it is you want to do



Identifying the resources you have to meet your goals



Determining the activities or strategies you will use



Identifying the intended impact or influence your programs will have on others and/or the community by articulating the outputs and outcomes resulting from your efforts

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## Which one should I choose?

	Logic Model	Theory of Change
Show someone something they can understand at a glance	✓	✓
Demonstrate you have identified the basic inputs, outputs and outcomes of your work	✓	
Summarize a complex theory into basic categories	✓	
Evaluate appropriate outcomes at the right time and the right sequence		✓
Explain why an initiative worked or did not work, and what exactly went wrong		✓
Design a complex initiative and want to have a rigorous plan for success		✓

<https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/theory-change-vs-logic-model-ann-murray-brown/>

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## Review your model



Keep it simple & concise



Is it meaningful?



Does it make sense? (do connections seem logical?)



Can it be done?  
Will it be done? (if not, why?)



Is anything missing? (verify with others)

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Now that you have created a model, put it to work!



Use it to build clarity and consensus with colleagues and volunteers about intended outcomes.



Use it to communicate with funders about accomplishments and resource needs.



Use it to tell your story to potential clients, donors, and media.



Use it to evaluate your work – a sound logic model is the foundation of effective evaluation.

## Put it to work!

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**Thanks for your time!**

*Questions, comments or takeaways?*

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Bohdanna Kinasevych

bohdanna@bkevaluation.com

204-795-0825

Canadian Evaluation Society MB Chapter

<https://cesmb.ca/>