Developing a Logic Model for Program Planning

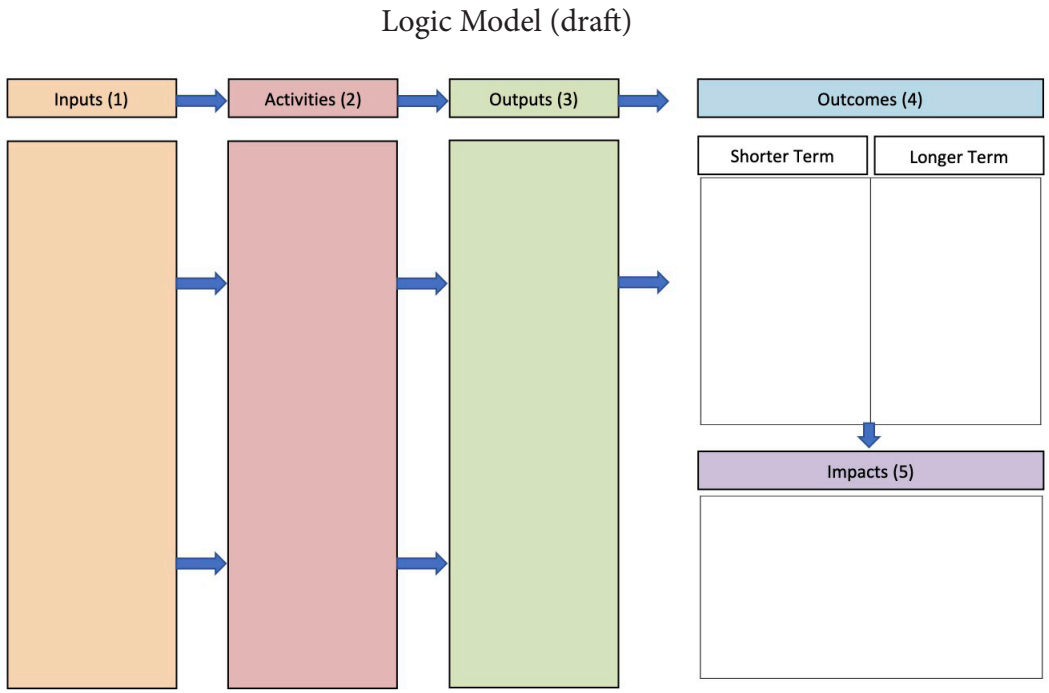
Purpose

Logic models are a picture of how your program works. But importantly, creating one as a team helps to build collaboration and vision in groups. They become part of the work itself. They are a model of how change happens, building on the idea of cause and effect. A completed logic model by a community coalition can be an effective tool in engaging community stakeholders and gathering support.

Logic models contribute to collaborative work by getting people on the same page, and provide a common language and a reference tool for evaluation and future efforts. Logic models help guide work at all stages. It is helpful for a team to create one at the beginning and refer to it to keep the team and project on track throughout, but can be just as useful for already existing groups to reorient and work towards sustainability.

Overview

- Logic models are a visual way of expressing the rationale or thought behind a program
- Logic models build on the underlying "theory" or set of assumptions that we have about why and how the program should work
- Attempt to show the links in a chain of reasoning about "what causes what" in relationship to desired goals and outcomes
- "Depicts the relationship between the program's activities and it's intended effects"
- "If-then relationship: If I do this activity, then I expect this outcome."



Materials Needed

- Group process/discussion
- White board or flip chart
- Markers

Method

It may be easiest to begin by answering the question "What is the biggest problem or need facing our community?" This will require some research. What you determine from the research will be framed as the Situation. This could be morbidity and mortality health outcomes, this could relate to the social, economic, or environmental climate of your community, etc. A helpful resource in researching morbidity and mortality health outcomes of your area is New Mexico's Indicator-Based Information System (NM-IBIS) https://ibis.health.state.nm.us/. Once you determine the problems facing your community you can describe the situation in a paragraph that you could append to the logic model. It would be helpful to summarize situation in a few words to be used on the logic model itself.

Another question to ask is "What impact do we want to have on our community?" This question can ultimately help shape the Priorities, or focus of your coalition or alliance. From the research used to determine the situation, there will likely be many problems facing your community. Factors that influence the determination of your priorities include: the mission statement of your coalition, values, resources, expertise, experience, history, what you know about the situation, and what others are doing in relation to the problem.

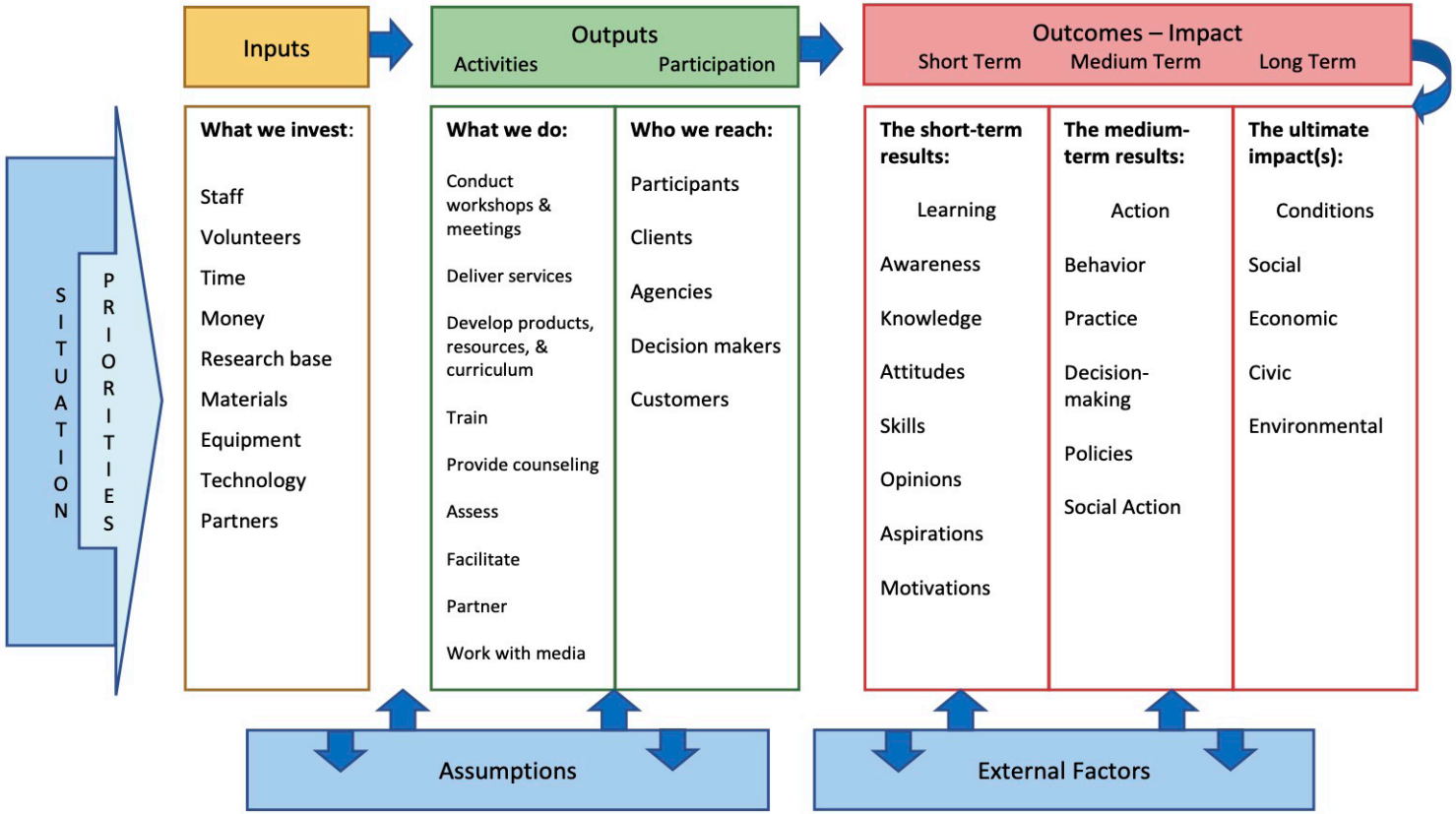
It's often helpful to look at examples of logic models that are being used by other communities. (See Logic Models below) Step Into Cuba's logic model prioritized the problem of obesity and diabetes in youth and adults. Their approach to addressing this problem has been to increase levels of physical activity (walking and hiking) among community members. This ultimately became the framework of VIVA Connects. The focus of walking and hiking is part of what distinguishes the VIVA Connects network, however the specific health outcome or problem identified may vary by community.

The following descriptions that will help guide the creation of your logic model section by section:

Method Continued

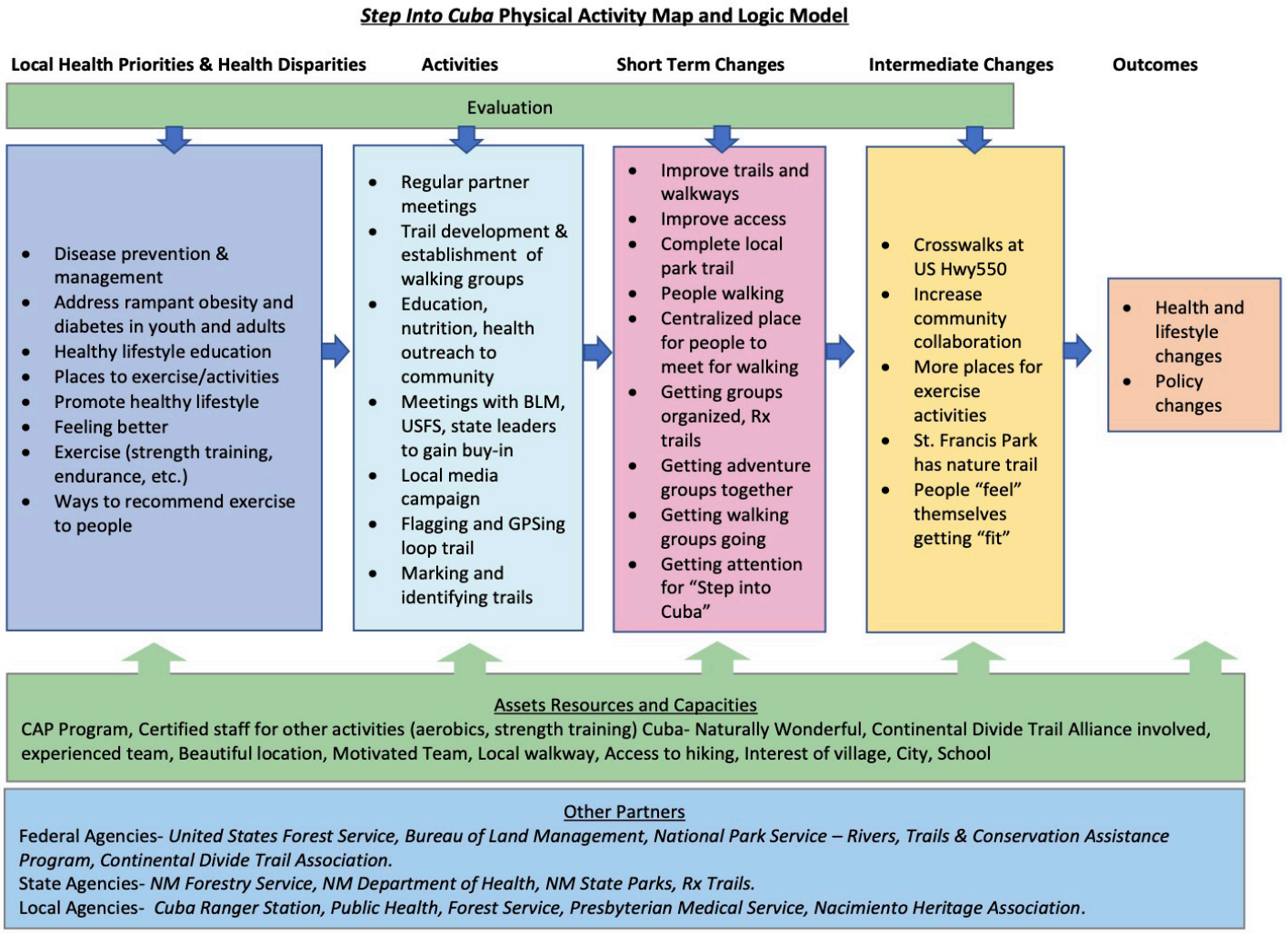
After a rough draft has been formed, it may be helpful to identify and acknowledge assumptions and external factors. Assumptions can be described as beliefs about how the program will work and the people that are involved. Consider the groups assumptions about the external and internal environment, what the program expects to achieve, and the learning styles, behavior, and motivations of the participants. It's important to acknowledge our assumptions out loud as a group to identify and alter faulty assumptions.

External Factors encompass the setting or environment where the program or project takes place. These are often out of the control of one single group or organization. External factors include: the culture, the climate, economic structure, housing patterns, demographic patterns, political environment, background and experiences of participants, media influence, and changing policies. It's important to consider the barriers that these factors pose, but also utilize them as strengths to facilitate progress. Try asking the question "How can the external factors of our community be used to help us reach our goals?"



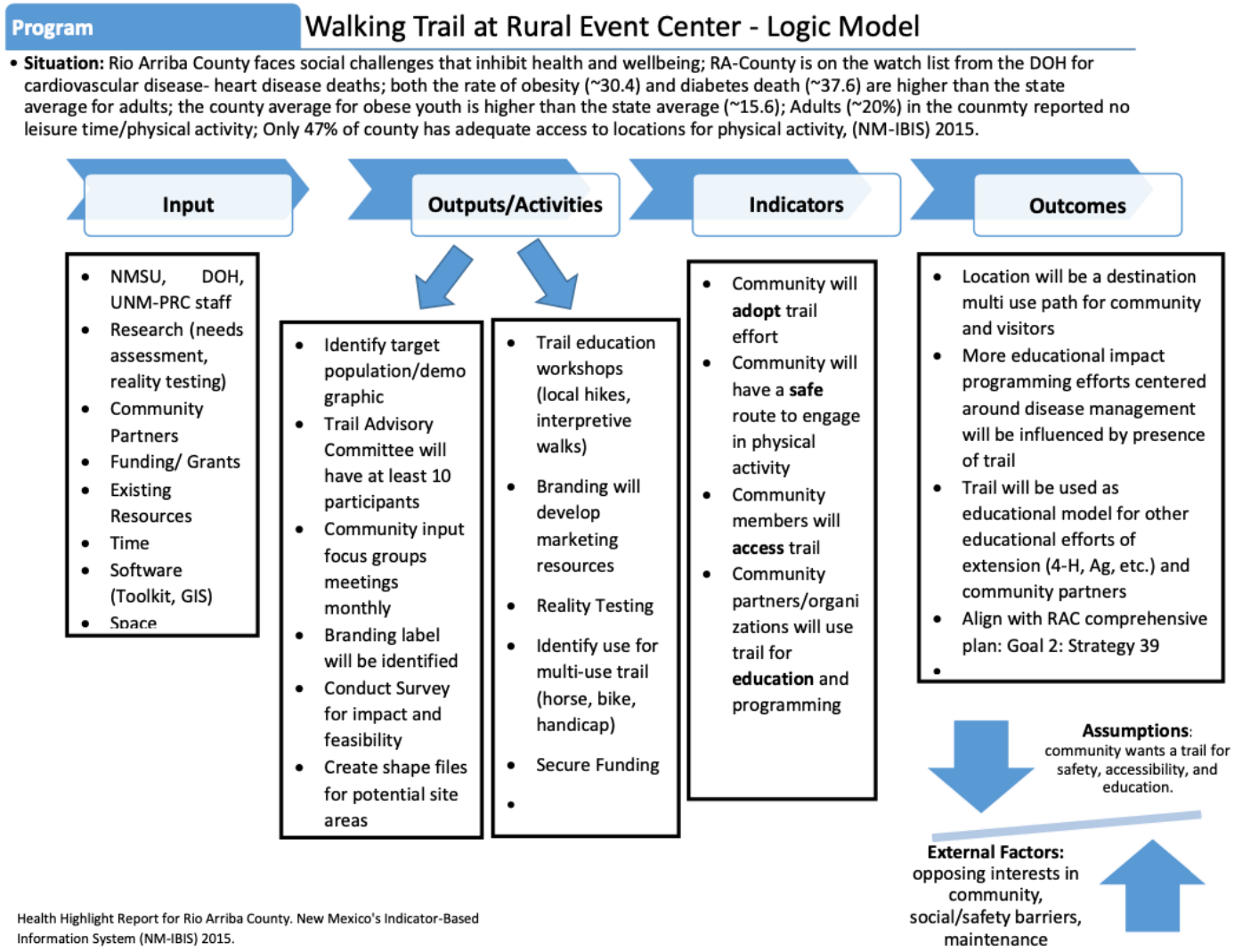
Lessons From Cuba

Early on in its coalition-building process, the Step Into Cuba Alliance created a logic model. This process helped coalition members formulate overarching goals for the community focused on improving health. Note how some of their activities are going to occur regularly and some activities are going to take a long time to develop.



Lessons from Abiquiu

Abiquiu's logic model shows a good example of describing the situation and briefly summarizing the assumptions and external factors.



Health Highlight Report for Rio Arriba County. New Mexico's Indicator-Based Information System (NM-IBIS) 2015.

Additional Resources

For more a more comprehensive discussion on logic models, see the following additional resources available online:

https://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/overview/models-for-community-health-and-development/logic-model-development/main
https://www.cdc.gov/eval/logicmodels/index.htm