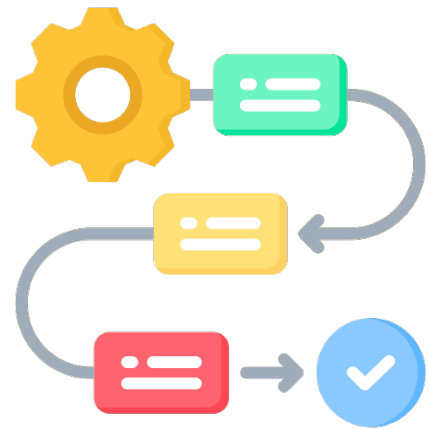




Criminal justice evaluation and performance monitoring

Guideline 1: Developing a program logic model

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Introduction

This guideline explains how to develop a program logic model for your service, using a step-by-step approach. It is designed for service providers, program managers, and policymakers who want to better understand or explain how their programs create change. A well-structured logic model can help with funding applications, performance monitoring, and long-term evaluation efforts.

What is a program logic model?

Before starting data collection, an important first step should be to describe in detail what your service is doing (i.e., the activities you are undertaking and the outputs you are producing) and the outcomes you are aiming to help clients to achieve. This exercise can help you and your staff to not only describe and understand how your service ‘works’ but also to identify what information you should be collecting to support evaluation and performance monitoring.

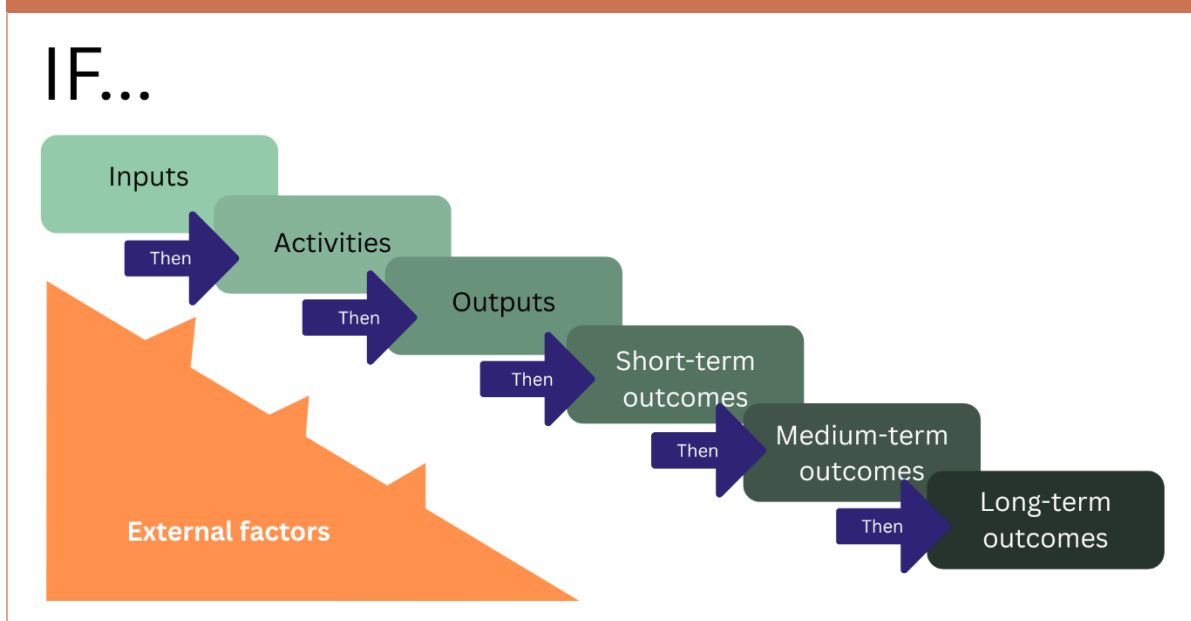
A program logic model is a way of describing a service, by tying together in a logical order the inputs, processes/activities, outputs and outcomes involved (see Figure 1). Logic models encourage those responsible for designing and managing services to think through, in a systematic way, what the service aims to accomplish in the short and longer term and the sequential steps by which the program will achieve its objectives.¹

Program logic models have been described as effective communication tools, that ‘tell the story’ of how your service is intended to work.²

¹ M Schacter (2002). *Not a “Tool Kit”: Practitioner’s Guide to Measuring the Performance of Public Programs*. Institute On Governance. Institute on Governance, Canada.

² Centre for Epidemiology and Evidence (2023). *Developing and Using Program Logic A Guide*. NSW Ministry of Health.

Figure 1: Components of a program logic model



Inputs

Inputs are the resources that go into the service, which are necessary for its implementation and delivery.

Common inputs are *clients* (the people participating in your service; see Guideline 3), *service providers* (the staff delivering the service), *service delivery guidelines*, *funding* and *referring agencies* (agencies making referrals to your service).

Activities

Activities are what your service does with these inputs (or resources), to try and bring about change for clients. Activities will be specific to your service, but common examples include *referral processes* (how clients are referred to your service), *eligibility and suitability assessment processes* (how clients are assessed as being eligible and/or suitable for your service), *service delivery activities* (e.g., case management) and *exit processes* (how clients are exited from your service; see Guideline 4).

Outputs

Outputs are the products or services produced by the activities delivered as part of the service (see Guideline 4).

Common examples of outputs delivered by services targeted at justice-involved people include:

- clients are referred to and engaged in the service;
- case management plans are developed by service staff and clients;
- clients participate in (and complete) service activities; and
- clients are exited from the service.

Outcomes

Outcomes are the changes that clients experience, as a result of receiving products and services.

As shown in Figure 1, outcomes can be short-, medium- or longer-term. An easy way of thinking about short-, medium- and longer-term outcomes, and differentiating between them, is *time*. Typically, short-term outcomes are changes you may observe during a client's participation in your service or immediately afterwards. Medium-term outcomes take a little bit longer, while longer-term outcomes can take years to achieve.

Another framework (Evaluation Toolbox by the [National Centre for Sustainability](#)) suggests categorising outcomes by the type or depth of impact. In this framework, short-term outcomes relate to “a change in knowledge, awareness, skills, motivation”, medium-term outcomes relate to a change in “behaviour or practice” and long-term outcomes relate to “environmental, social or economic change”.

It is important to recognise that **short-, medium- and longer-term outcomes are also linked. Achieving longer-term outcomes necessarily involves achieving shorter- and medium-term outcomes.** Some clients may ‘skip’ a step (e.g., move straight to medium-term outcomes), but by separating out change as a series of steps, we can celebrate what appear to be small wins for what they really are – important stepping stones to long-term change.

External factors

The final component of a program logic model requires you to consider the environment in which your program is being delivered. Economic, political, cultural, historical and social contexts all impact how your program is delivered and the outcomes that you can achieve. Common external factors that are likely to impact service delivery include:

- natural disasters (e.g., the COVID-19 pandemic, bushfires);
- staffing shortages;
- lack of available community-based services that will accept client referrals;
- housing stress;
- level of stakeholder buy-in; and
- relevant changes in policy and practice (e.g., changes to policing directives or criminal laws, public opinion and media reporting on crime).

It is important to recognise that many people involved in the criminal justice system also experience mental health and alcohol and drug issues, which may present barriers or complications for engagement in support services. Therefore, for criminal justice service organisations, more specific external factors could include:

- lack of available mental health support (e.g. immediate counselling);
- lack of rehabilitation facilities that will accept clients on pharmacotherapy.

It is important to document these external factors, as they provide valuable context that could explain why components of your service have not been implemented as intended and/or why your service has struggled to achieve its intended goals. Crucially, many of these external factors are beyond the control of service providers. They may also explain why there is additional pressure on services and/or clients.

How can services develop their own program logic model?

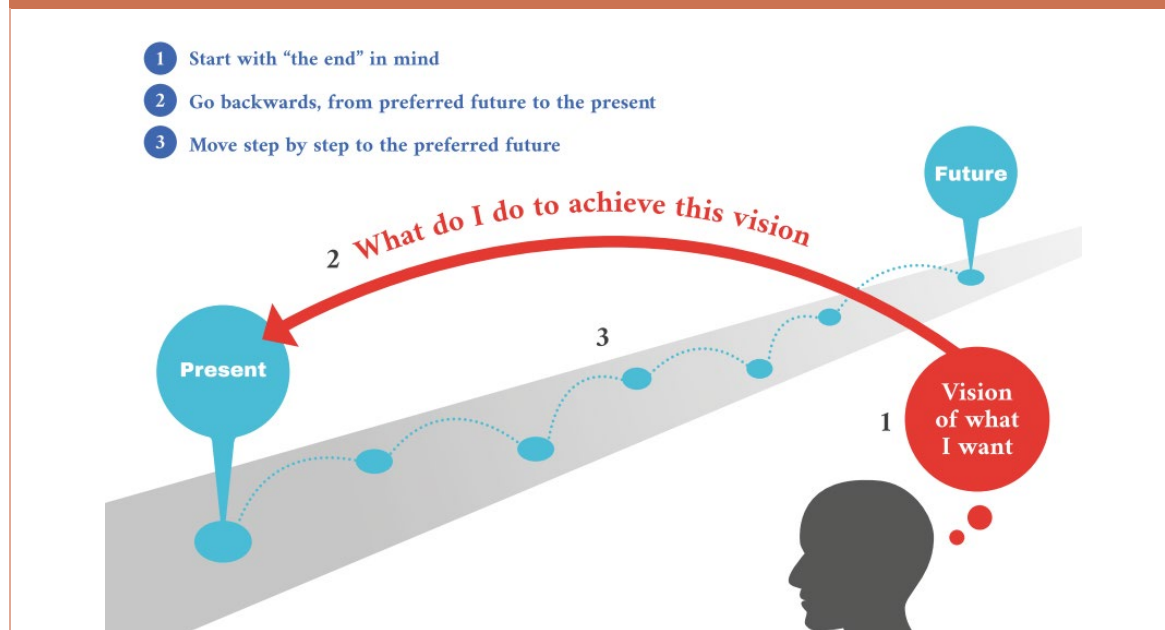
A range of resources have been developed that can support you to develop a program logic model³. One of the main methods used to develop logic models is called **backcasting** (see Figure 2). This involves working backwards through a model, by first identifying the longer-term outcomes, then the medium-and short-term outcomes, outputs etc. A hypothetical example of a reintegration service can be found at **Appendix C**. One of the benefits of backcasting is that it encourages you to think about the steps and conditions that are necessary to achieve your service's goals, rather than fixating on the longer-term vision of your service. As the Centre for Epidemiology and Evidence explains:

*compared to approaches involving forecasting, [backcasting] allows stakeholders to consider what is needed to create the future, rather than thinking about what is currently happening and trying to predict the future*⁴

The steps involved in back-casting are described below.

Regardless of method that you use to develop a logic model, it is important that the development process is **collaborative** and involves a range of **staff** in your service, to ensure you are getting different voices involved in the process. It should also include current and/or past **clients** of the program.

Figure 2: Example of backcasting⁵



³ See: Centre for Epidemiology and Evidence (2023). *Developing and Using Program Logic A Guide*. NSW Ministry of Health; Better Evaluation Knowledge (n.d.) 'Evaluation Frameworks and Guides', <https://www.betterevaluation.org/frameworks-guides>.

⁴ Centre for Epidemiology and Evidence (2023). *Developing and Using Program Logic A Guide*. NSW Ministry of Health.

⁵ V Mulligan (2024). 'Episode Six: Backcasting Workshop'

<<https://thefuturesworkshop.substack.com/p/episode-six-backcasting-workshop>>.

Step 1: Identify the longer-term goals and objectives of your service

Identify goals and objectives for your service or intervention, projecting some years into the future. See Guideline 6, for a range of longer-term outcomes that may be relevant for your service.

Step 2: Think about what needs to happen, to achieve longer-term outcomes

Think about what is needed to influence long-term outcomes for clients and work backwards, to determine a series of medium-term outcomes that, if achieved, could lead to your longer-term outcomes. Then, work backwards again from the medium-term outcomes to a set of short-term outcomes.

We have described a number of short-, medium- and long-term outcomes in Guideline 6 and suggested tools that may be useful to measure these.



Activity to help you think about outcomes

If you are finding Steps 1 and 2 a bit tricky, you can use the following group activity as a starting point. You will need butchers paper and (a lot of) post it notes.

Invite a group of staff members to write down all the outcomes that they think your service is working towards on individual post it notes. Alternatively, you can write all the outcomes included in Guideline 6 and identify the outcomes they *don't* think are relevant.

The group then comes together, to talk about the outcomes and identify if any are missing or have been identified that others do not believe should be included.

Once you have a set of outcomes, everyone works together to group them into high-level themes, and then starts to sequence them. What outcomes are logically linked?

Step 3: Develop hypothetical scenarios, to describe a client's pathway through your service

In this step, think about the inputs, activities and outputs from your service that work towards these outcomes. What flow of actions might be required to achieve each link and how feasible are these pathways?

As part of this stage, you can also identify priority areas – what *must* happen to get us to the desired outcome, and what *might* assist?

A helpful exercise for this stage of backcasting involves developing a series of scenarios with different clients who may be referred to your service. Scenarios could be based on common client 'types' that are already (or you expect will be) referred to your service. However, it's also a good idea to think about uncommon or 'outlier' scenarios.

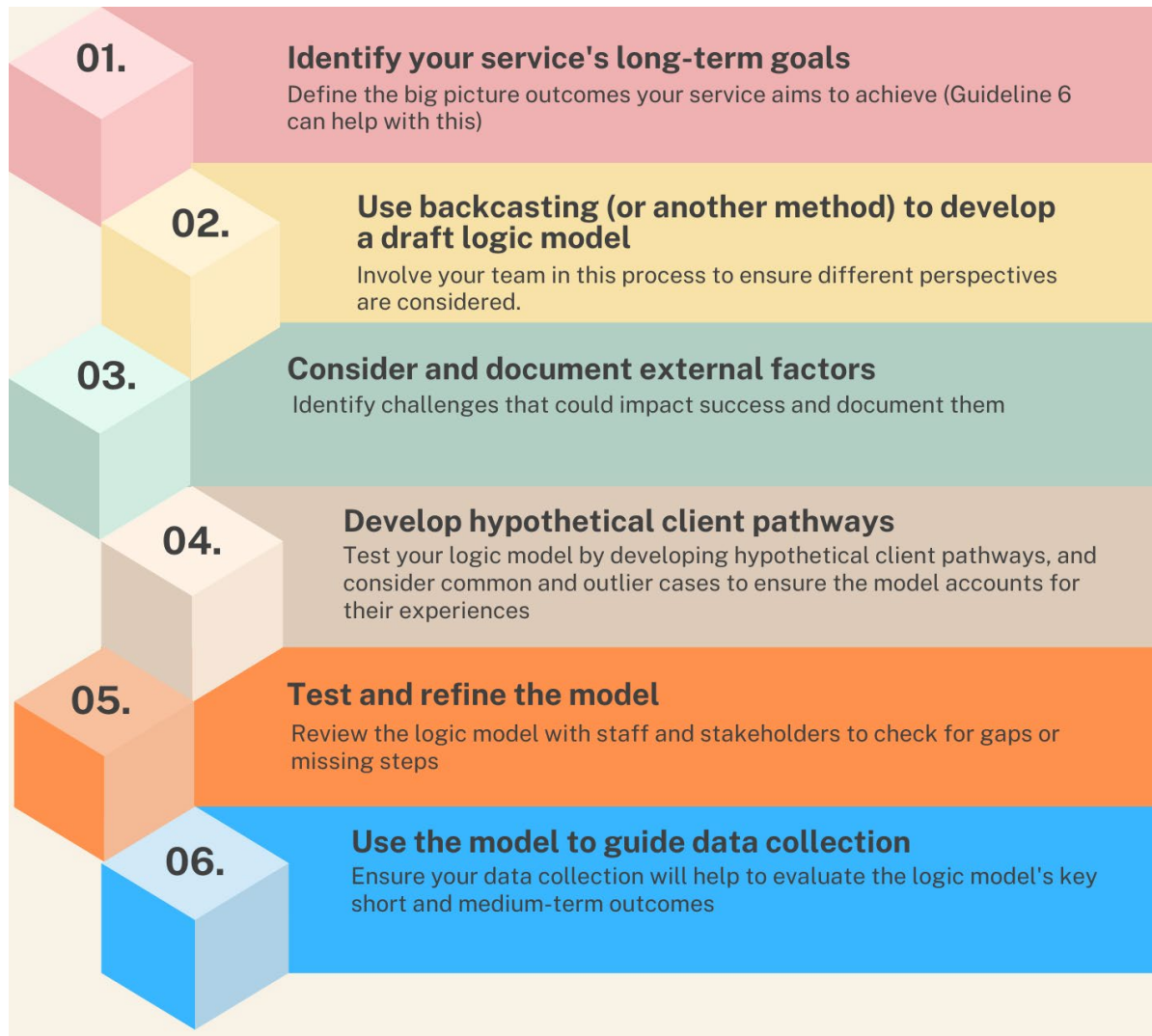
Questions to ask yourself in each of these scenarios include:

- What does this pathway look like?
- What is essential for this pathway to succeed?
- What are the points at which the pathway could break down?

- Does this pathway look different for different clients?

Backcasting can be a good way to think about *several different* future scenarios and work out the implications and feasibility of planning for each of them.

What are some next steps services can take?



Additional resources

Better Evaluation 2025. <https://www.betterevaluation.org/>

Evaluation Toolbox 2024. *Program Logic*. <https://evaluationtoolbox.net.au/program-logic/> Knowlton L & Phillips C 2013. *The Logic Model Guidebook. Better Strategies for Great Results*. Sage, 2nd ed. Chapter 3. https://us.sagepub.com/sites/default/files/upm-binaries/23938_Chapter_3_Creating_Program_Logic_Models.pdf

New South Wales Health 2023. *Developing and Using Program Logic: A Guide* <https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/research/Publications/developing-program-logic.pdf>

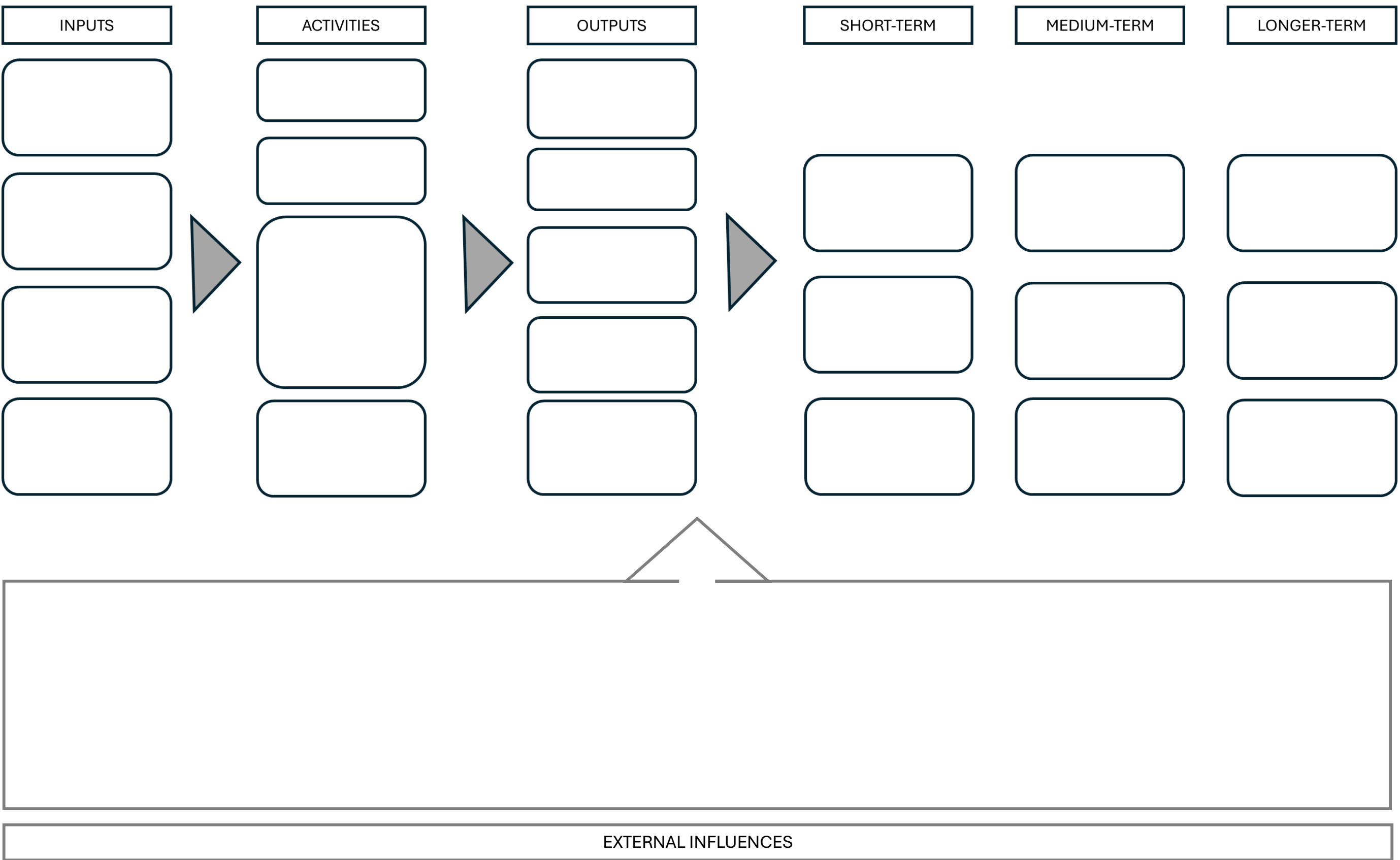
Queensland Government n.d. *Developing a Program Logic Model*. <https://s3.treasury.qld.gov.au/files/Developing-a-program-logic-model-Information-Sheet-QG-Program-Evaluation-Guidelines.pdf>

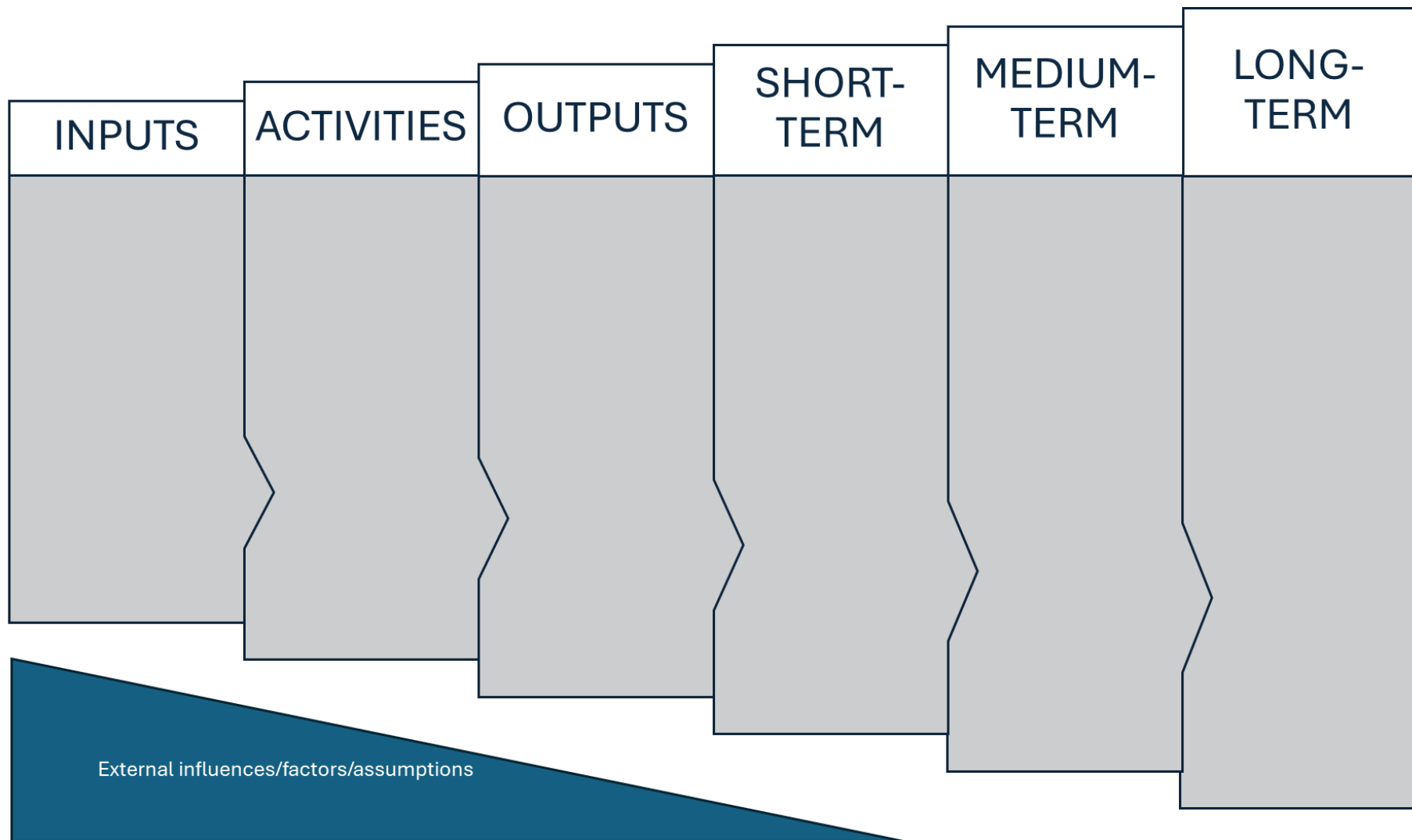
The Health Communication Unit 2001. *Logic Models Workbook*. Version 6.1. https://www.betterevaluation.org/sites/default/files/Logic_Models_Workbook.pdf

Appendix A: Example outcomes

Table A1: Common short-, medium- and longer-term outcomes associated with criminal justice interventions

Short-term	Medium-term	Longer-term
• Understanding of available support services increases • Access to Centrelink payments increases • Problem solving-skills improve • Interpersonal trust increases • Parenting attitudes, knowledge and skills improve • Motivation to become connected to culture increases • Independent living skills improve • Motivation and perceived ability to change their lives improves • Recognition of the costs associated with their negative behaviours increases • Pro-criminal attitudes decrease • Understanding of bail orders and conditions increases	• Engagement with health services improves • Psychosocial health improves • Physical health improves • Involvement with offending peer networks decreases • Involvement with pro-social networks increases • Improved feelings of belonging and support if they need it • Confidence in cultural identity increases • Attendance at and participation in cultural events increases • Access to appropriate and stable accommodation increases • Engagement and commitment to paid employment increases • Literacy and numeracy skills increase • Financial security increases • Confidence in ability to avoid harmful behaviours in high-risk situations increases • Reduced impulsivity • Risk of reoffending decreases • Access to children increases (where safe and appropriate)	• Improvements in mental and physical health are maintained in the longer-term • Reliance on disability and other support payments are reduced • Reductions in alcohol and other drug use are maintained in the longer-term • Community and cultural connections are maintained and strengthened • Supported and stable housing arrangements are maintained in the longer-term • Secure and stable employment is maintained • Reliance on Centrelink and other welfare payments decrease • Desistance is maintained





Appendix C: Sample program logic model

Here we have provided an example of a logic model for a hypothetical service engaging with people in the criminal justice system. This community-based service takes referrals from ACT Corrective Services, to support the reintegration of people who have just been released from the Alexander Maconochie Centre (AMC). They have a pretty flexible service delivery model, but the main activities that they deliver are one-on-one case management, referral to other community-based services and brokerage funding for housing-related costs (e.g., bonds).

