

Target Population



In building a logic model, you will need to identify your target population and its key characteristics. If your target population is already participating in the service or if the service has been in existence for some time, it may seem unnecessary to focus on the characteristics of the target population. However, it is important to be sure that we are accurate about these characteristics before going further. It is also important to know and factor in the external influences participants experience. For meaningful change to occur, it is also crucial to find out if these changes are wanted or needed by those who are identified as the targets for change.

The following are suggestions for identifying your target population:

- Be as specific as possible in characterizing the target population in order to make sure intended outcomes are meaningful and appropriate for them.
- Staff should be encouraged to share their ideas and experiences of working with the target population.
- Participants are the best source of information on their lives, the factors that influence them, and their personal needs and goals.

Start by making a profile of the proposed target population, including age, gender, ethnicity, educational status, economic status, and personal risk factors. Then, record and discuss community-wide factors and conditions that positively or negatively affect the target population to assist you in making sure the service and outcomes chosen are the right “fit” for these participants. Questions to consider might include safety issues, isolation, quality of housing, etc. For each of the conditions you note, identify how much impact it has on participants:

- Is school a significant factor in their lives? If so, in what way?
- Is employment or lack of it a significant factor in their lives?
- What major concerns are shared by these participants?
- What would they like to see changed for the community, for family members, or for themselves?
- What do you see as the major assets of the community in which the target population lives?
- In what ways does your program connect with and build on these assets?

Finally, you will need to learn about the aspirations of participants and the needs that they feel are not being adequately met. Members of the target population already participating in your program are the best source of information. Otherwise, you need to find a group of potential participants and listen to them. This information can be gathered through a group discussion or through one-on-one conversations. In order to make this information gathering somewhat objective, it is wise to use the same format with everyone.

Questions to ask might include the following:

- Why did you come to this program?
- What do you think is the most important thing about this program?
- What do you believe will happen because you attend it?
- What needs do you have that are being met by the program?
- What needs do you have that are not yet being met?
- What do you hope will change for you or your family because you participate?
- Are there changes that have already occurred because of participating in the program?
- What would you miss the most if you couldn't participate in it again?
- What changes would you like to see in the program that would make it more beneficial to you?
- What would you like more of, or less of from this program or agency?