

July 2009 Newsletter:

**The Architecture of Project Design and Presentation**

There is a [condensed version](#) of this article.

In [June's newsletter](#), we looked at the human dimension of project design; we talked about participatory needs assessments, consensus building, and donor input. This month we will look at management tools that will increase the likelihood that your project will have human-scale impact.

**Beginning Logframes**

The Logical Framework (logframe), also known as the Theory of Change, is a powerful tool that aids in project planning, budgeting, project management, and monitoring and evaluation (M&E) for assessing impact. Different groups and organizations take different approaches, so logframes come in a variety of styles and configurations. In working with donors and stakeholders, your logframe will allow you to communicate to others exactly what you are trying to accomplish, and convey to them if you are making progress toward your goals.

In last month's newsletter we used a participatory needs assessment to define the problem, and then researched activities that would provide solutions in order to come up with a project concept. Your project concept can be laid out in a simplified logframe matrix that allows you to organize:

- the project goal
- outcomes that fulfill the goal
- outputs that fulfill the outcomes
- activities that fulfill the outputs
- inputs necessary for the activities



Here is a simple project that makes a good example; providing ESL and job training for refugees.

<b>ESL Project Concept</b>					
<b>Problem Statement</b>		Refugee families have trouble becoming independent due to a lack of language & vocational skills.			
<b>Goal</b>		All refugee families and individuals in Anytown, USA are self-sufficient.			
<b>Objective</b>	300 adult refugees in Anytown, USA receive sufficient English and vocational training courses over a 24 month period to allow 75% of them to qualify for and get jobs.	<b>Outcome</b>	Refugee families increase their household income and job related benefits.		
<b>Outputs</b>	Refugees received 24 months of English language courses and cultural immersion	Refugees received 18 months of vocational training courses and 6 months of OJT	Refugees received 12 months of follow up support between month 24 and month 36		
<b>Activities</b>	Classes      Mentoring	Vocational training      OJT Traineeships	Cultural immersion		
<b>Inputs</b>	Staff and volunteers	State Funds, grant funds	Community college facilities	Partnering businesses	

In a logframe other questions arise: were short-term, medium-term and long-term outcomes achieved and verified?

Placing our project information into a true logframe matrix, we will arrange the components in a vertical axis indicators and means of verification. Be sure to arrange the activities in a chronological order.

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ESL Logical Framework						
Hierarchy of Objectives				Objectively Verifiable Indicators	Means of Verification	Assumptions
<b>Goal</b>	All refugee families and individuals in Anytown, USA are self-sufficient.			Percentage of refugee families that are self-sufficient in Anytown	Comparison between baseline and final evaluation survey Interviews with participants	Refugees are interested in being self sufficient The economic climate can support self sufficiency
<b>Objective 1</b>	300 adult refugees in Anytown, USA receive sufficient English and vocational training courses over a 24 month period to allow 75% of them to qualify for and secure jobs and discontinue welfare benefits.		<b>Outcome 1</b>	Percentage of refugee participants whose increased language and vocational skills empowered them to secure jobs and become self-sufficient within 36 months of the start of language & vocational classes	Comparison between baseline and final evaluation survey Interviews with participants Family budgets Pay stubs Welfare records	Refugees and businesses are interested in participating in a multicultural vocational and job-placement program.
<b>Output 1.1</b>	Refugees received 24 months of English language courses and cultural immersion			Percentage of refugees who completed 24 months of courses with passing grade	Attendance records Report Cards	Participants willing to remain program
	<b>Activity 1.1.1</b>	Develop Curriculum and class schedule		Curriculum and schedule prepared	Printed curriculum and 24 month class schedule	Space available in community college
	<b>Activity 1.1.2</b>	Research and purchase course materials		Units purchased	Invoices	ESL materials exist for purchase
	<b>Activity 1.1.3</b>	Interview and hire 4 ESL teachers		Number of teachers hired	Employment contracts	Sufficient, available ESL teachers
	<b>Activity 1.1.4</b>	Recruit and enroll refugees in classes.		Number enrolled	Attendance records	Refugees have interest in attending
	<b>Activity 1.1.5</b>	Teach classes for 24 months		Percentage of refugees who completed 24 months of courses with passing grade	Sign-in sheets Attendance records Report cards	Participants willing to remain in the program
	<b>Activity 1.1.6</b>	Locate and train volunteer mentors		Number trained	Volunteer agreements	Sufficient, available volunteer mentors
	<b>Activity 1.1.7</b>	Assign mentors to refugees		Number assigned	Mentor log and notes	Willingness of refugees to participate
	<b>Activity 1.1.8</b>	Mentors work with participants for 24 months		Percentage of refugees in program who completed 24 months of mentor program	Participant interviews Volunteer coordinator log Mentor log and notes	Willingness of refugees to participate
<b>Output 1.2</b>	Refugees received 18 months of vocational training courses and 6 months of OJT			Percentage of refugees who completed 18 months of courses with passing grades Completed 6 month traineeship	Report Cards OJT Certificate	Participants willing to remain in the program
	<b>Activity 1.2.1</b>	Develop appropriate vocational training curriculum from existing community college classes		Curriculum was developed	Published curriculum	Sufficient, appropriate classes exist in community college
	<b>Activity 1.2.2</b>	Recruit and enroll refugees in classes		Number enrolled	Attendance records	Refugees have interest in attending
	<b>Activity 1.1.3</b>	Teach vocational courses for 18 months		Percentage of refugees who completed 18 months of courses with passing grades	Sign-in sheets Attendance records Report cards	Participants willing to remain in the program
	<b>Activity 1.2.4</b>	Recruit businesses to participate in OJT & traineeships		Number of business participating	Program/business agreements	Businesses have interest in participating
	<b>Activity 1.2.5</b>	Recruit and place established refugees with businesses in supervisory role		Number placed	Employment contract	Sufficient trained established refugees have interest in participating
	<b>Activity 1.2.6</b>	Recruit and place refugees in traineeships		Number placed	Certificate signed by advisor and job supervisor	Refugees have interest in participating Sufficient traineeships available
<b>Output 1.3</b>	Refugees received 12 months of follow up support between month 24 and month 36			Percentage of participants received 12 months of cultural and job support from their mentor and follow up English lessons from ESL teacher	Participant interviews Mentor log and notes ESL teacher log and notes	Participants willing to remain program
	<b>Activity 1.3.1</b>	Assign mentors to refugees		Number of participants Number assigned	Mentor log and notes	Sufficient available volunteer mentors
	<b>Activity 1.3.2</b>	Mentors work with participants for 12 months		Percentage of refugees who completed 12 months of mentor program	Volunteer coordinator log Mentor log and notes	Willingness of refugees to participate
	<b>Activity 1.3.3</b>	Hold weekly get togethers		Number of participants Number of get togethers	Mentor log and notes	Refugees have interest in participating
	<b>Activity 1.3.4</b>	Connect mentors to business partners as resource person		Number connected	Contact information form signed by mentor and job supervisor Mentor log and notes	Businesses have interest in participating
	<b>Activity 1.3.5</b>	Hold monthly cultural activities for refugee families		Number of participants Number of get togethers	Interviews and photos Mentor log and notes	Refugees have interest in participating
	<b>Activity 1.3.6</b>	Hold follow-up English lessons for 12 months		Number of participants Number of lessons	ESL teacher log and notes	Sufficient, available ESL teachers

With this framework you can easily work backwards to see if the activities do everything necessary to fulfill the output, and if the outputs will do everything necessary to fulfill the Objective.

The indicators and means of verification are the beginnings of a Monitoring and Evaluation Plan. They will be the project manager's tools to see if the project is meeting goals during the course of the project and at the end of the project. Be sure your indicators are specific and measureable.

The outcome is the reason that you designed the project. Although you are in control of the activities and the outputs, you can only influence peoples' behavior change through the results of the project. Development is people-centered and in this example, it is up to the beneficiary to remain employed, manage their funds and become self sufficient. If your project design theory works, then there will be a change for the better – hence – Theory of Change.

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## Project Budget

Since your activities in the logframe are in a chronological order, they can be cut and pasted into Excel. By filling in quantities and unit costs, you can derive the total cost of an activity. I break activities down into fine detail; it is easier to estimate the cost of a single, simple part of an activity than a complex component.

The finished budget will allow a future project manager to see the steps necessary to fulfill each activity, and will provide greater cost control.

ESL Budget		This partial, simplified budget is an 'example only' to show concordance with the logframe				
Activity	Detail	Unit	Quantity	Unit Price	Total	
<b>Output 1.1</b>	<b>Refugees received 24 months of English language courses and cultural immersion</b>					
<b>Activity 1.1.1</b>	<b>Develop Curriculum</b>					
	Director partners w/ community college for space	Month	0.5	3000	1500	
	Director develops curriculum and class schedule	Month	1.5	3000	4500	
	Assistant	Month	2	2250	4500	
	Office expenses	Month	2	500	1000	
<b>Activity 1.1.2</b>	<b>Research and purchase course materials</b>					
	Director researches and authorizes purchase	Month	0.5	3000	1500	
	Course Materials	Unit	300	200	60000	
	Assistant	Month	0.5	3000	1500	
	Office expenses	Month	0.5	500	250	
<b>Activity 1.1.3</b>	<b>Interview and hire 4 ESL teachers</b>					
	Director place ads, interview	Month	0.5	3000	1500	
	Director contracts with 4 ESL teachers	Month	0.5	3000	1500	
	Assistant	Month	1	2250	2250	
	Office expenses	Month	1	500	500	
<b>Activity 1.1.4</b>	<b>Recruit and enroll refugees in classes.</b>					
	Director recruits refugees	Month	2	3000	6000	
	Director coordinates with CC to enroll students	Month	1	3000	3000	
	Assistant	Month	3	2250	6750	
	Office expenses	Month	3	500	1500	
<b>Activity 1.1.5</b>	<b>Teach classes for 24 months</b>					
	Director part time oversees classes 24 months	Month	12	3000	36000	
	4 ESL Teachers 24 months	Month	96	2250	216000	
	Assistant	Month	12	2250	27000	
	Office expenses	Month	6	500	3000	
<b>Activity 1.1.6</b>	<b>Recruit and train volunteer mentors</b>					
	Volunteer coordinator recruits, interviews & enrolls mentors	Month	2	2250	4500	
	Volunteer coordinator trains mentors	Month	2	2250	4500	
	Assistant	Month	2	2250	4500	
	Office expenses	Month	2	500	1000	
<b>Activity 1.1.7</b>	<b>Assign mentors to refugees</b>					
	Volunteer coordinator matches volunteers/refugees	Month	1	2250	2250	
	Assistant	Month	1	2250	2250	
	Office expenses	Month	1	500	500	
<b>Activity 1.1.8</b>	<b>Mentors work with participants for 24 months</b>					
	Coordinator oversees volunteers part time for 24 months	Month	12	2250	27000	
	Assistant	Month	12	2250	27000	
	Office expenses	Month	12	500	6000	
<b>Total</b>	<b>Output 1.1</b>				459250	

## Project Scheduling

Similar to the budget, the activities can be pasted into an Excel spreadsheet designed as a calendar bar chart. This is a quick way for all stakeholders to quickly grasp the scope of the project.

ESL Project Schedule: Output 1.1		Year 1				Year 2			
Activity	Detail	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8
Output 1.1	Refugees received 24 months of English language courses								
Activity 1.1.1	Develop Curriculum								
Activity 1.1.2	Purchase course materials								
Activity 1.1.3	Hire 4 ESL teachers								
Activity 1.1.4	Enroll refugees in classes								
Activity 1.1.5	Teach classes for 24 months								
Activity 1.1.6	Train volunteer mentors								
Activity 1.1.7	Assign mentors to refugees								
Activity 1.1.8	Mentors for 24 months								

## Logframe Summary

The first logframe is the hardest. Consider hiring a consultant to develop your first one – it can simply be revised for each new project, giving your organization a family of project documents that are absolutely parallel to each other. If a year passes before receiving grant funds, the project documents will make it easier for a new project manager to fully understand the project than if they only received a narrative-based grant proposal.

## Consensus Building

Using this logframe information, the fundraising staff can prepare a draft proposal using the donor's forms or guidelines. Keep the narrative parts of the proposal short, concise and to the point. Return to the donor with the logframe, budget, schedule and draft proposal and ask for their comments.

Donors are trying to accomplish their missions and goals, and they will support a good proposal with sound suggestions. Encouraging donor input forges partnerships and ownership. Donor input can also mean the difference between a mediocre proposal – and a finely crafted one that fits donor mission like a glove. A well detailed proposal will give the donor the confidence that your project will be well managed.

## Final proposal and submittal

You have filled in the donor's forms and have incorporated their latest suggestions. Two important things need to be done before submittal:

1. Ask a trusted development colleague to review the proposal for clarity, content and concordance.
2. Ask someone akin to your college freshman English (or local language) professor to review the proposal for grammar and spelling.

Make the suggested corrections, and deliver the proposal. Good luck on your project!

## In Review

Here are the highlights of good project design:

- Using participatory needs assessments
- Researching the project theme for empirical evidence
- Building community consensus
- Writing a project fact sheet
- Requesting donor input
- Developing a logistic framework, budget and project schedule
- Writing a draft proposal
- Requesting donor input
- Revising the draft into a final proposal
- Submittal

**Next Month: August 2009 Newsletter**

**How to launch a community development project.**

**Congratulations! You received the grant funding. Here is what you need to do get the project under way.**

Please feel free to contact me with questions.

Sincerely

Tim Magee

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