

# LOGIC MODELS

## Activating Community Opportunities

Triton College, Oak Park Public  
Library, & the Equity Team

Oak Park, IL | APRIL 2019



## Grantee Reflections:

### *Creating & Adapting the ACO Logic Model*

**The project partnership team, made of a staff from Triton College, the E-Team, and Oak Park Public Library, worked together for equity in educational outcomes in Oak Park, IL for 18 months.** Their significant learning about logic models points to the importance of treating this tool as a fluid, flexible tool.

The Triton team created only one version of their logic model at the very beginning of their project. Deborah Baness King, team lead and Triton's Dean of Academic Success recalls, "Initially, we did use it as our guiding document. . . We were very committed to it, very married to it. Every meeting we had, we had our goals and objectives set up to mirror it so we could do statistical reporting." Several months into the project, the team attended a workshop on Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD), which emphasized activating the assets and leadership of the community beyond the existing partner organizations toward their project goal.

As the team strove to grasp and implement this "huge shift in mindset," the original logic model, which they had considered a strict map for action and focus, became a hindrance their creativity and cohesion. "We spent a lot of time convincing everybody it was OK to deviate from the logic model. We spent a lot of time even reaching out to [the funder, asking], 'Are we OK in doing this?' We were having massive conference calls where he was saying, 'Yes, we're expecting you to deviate. Yes, we know that you have to change on the fly. It's OK.' That was probably the biggest resistance because people wanted to be able to point to it and say, 'this is what it is.' . . . It was easy

### **Project Description:**

Eam ei feugiat eligendi. Decore sadipscing nam id. Ad sit tota interesset, per brute inductum in. Ne ullum voluptua comprehensam has. Ad sit tota interesset, per brute inductum in.

to agree on what was on paper, but we couldn't get to the point where we say, 'How do we alter the paper?'"

As a result, the team abandoned the more detailed aspect of the model as they adapted and evolved their project. "It just became easier to say, 'OK the paper is there, but we're still meeting the outcomes. And as long as we're meeting the outcomes, how we get there may not be as important--and now we have to refocus on the three different partners being responsible for doing all of the work of really shifting that work to the community members who were willing to take on the responsibility."

The project's path did deviate: "We didn't do things the way we originally thought." Ultimately, the team has realized that their project, partnership, and the community held much more potential than they thought-- and which their early logic model did not capture or take into account. "I think we had not really understood or had taken the time to visualize how far-reaching some of the activities we're doing are."

Looking back now, the team can identify specific deviations -- some due to the kind of unplanned changes which are often intrinsic to community engagement work, and others that stemmed from the team's shift to prioritizing community mobilisation over simply carrying out the original project plan to deliver tutoring. For instance, the "key focal point" of activities shifted from schools to Oak Park Public Library due to unanticipated administration changes which removed access. Additionally, originally 50 volunteers from Triton were to be tutors at Oak Park Public Library. "When we shifted . . . the way we

capitalized on the community, we ended up with volunteers from the community almost completely.”

Additionally, perhaps the most surprising deviation that the team experienced was their discovery of how much passion, energy and resources available in the community ready to be offered to the project. “One of the other things that we experienced that was so unanticipated and eye-opening was that our cost-match (in-kind and cash-match) for this came out to be close to \$450,000 if not more for the 18 months. And what we experienced was that things that we had money budgeted for, we couldn’t spend the money! . . . In our first twelve months, we ended up exceeding our required match for the entire grant. So . . . we’ll actually have about \$10-\$15,000 that didn’t expend of grant funds, and we’ll have \$20-\$30,000 more in match than we anticipated. So that was extremely eye-opening. . .

“And the small amount of money we had to invest in getting someone who could be the facilitator and coordinator to put this together – the return on investment was much more than we anticipated.”

*“It’s not about what’s meeting what’s on paper. It’s about making sure that, at the end, it’s something the community will have owned and is going to push forward.”*

Deborah Baness King, Ph.D  
Dean of Academic Success, Triton College

**Looking back, the team reports that they would do the following differently regarding their logic model development and utilization:**

• **Do more early on to identify partners, especially through one partner who was already deeply embedded in the community**

“I don’t think that I would have approached it with such limited focus of the partners that were available in the community. Oak Park has an extremely involved community base, and I think if we had just done our homework a little bit more – we stayed in our comfort zone – we would have been able to produce a much more rich infrastructure for the community.”

• **Hire main decision-making staff from the community**

“The other thing I should change is that, while we repped entities that were in the community, we only had one employee or one person working directly ON the grant who was actually from the community. And so you had a lot of people making decisions about the community who had no stake in the game. And I think that was a reality check too for us.”

• **Make changes early & often while focusing on community ownership**

“I think we would have made changes in the beginning. I think we would have said, ‘It’s OK that it doesn’t turn out exactly as it was on paper. . . It’s not about what’s meeting what’s on paper. It’s about making sure that, at the end, it’s something the community will have owned and is going to push forward.’ I think that would have saved us a lot of heartache.”

• **Embrace it as a fluid document.**

“We would have embraced it as a fluid document. . . We met almost every other week for the entirety of the grant. Once a month, we would update on where we were in meeting our objectives. I think if we’d been better at embracing or accepting that it was a fluid document, we could have revisited it and said, ‘OK, are we still really doing this? Are we not really doing this?’ But it became a taboo document, like, ‘Let’s not bring it up because it’s

going to cause some friction.’ . . . And it would give us permission to keep pushing if we wanted to . . . [or to] go in a different direction, and to be able to have those kinds of open dialogue and be able to continue to massage the document as we moved through each month of the grant would have been extremely helpful. And it would have put all of us at ease to a much greater degree.”

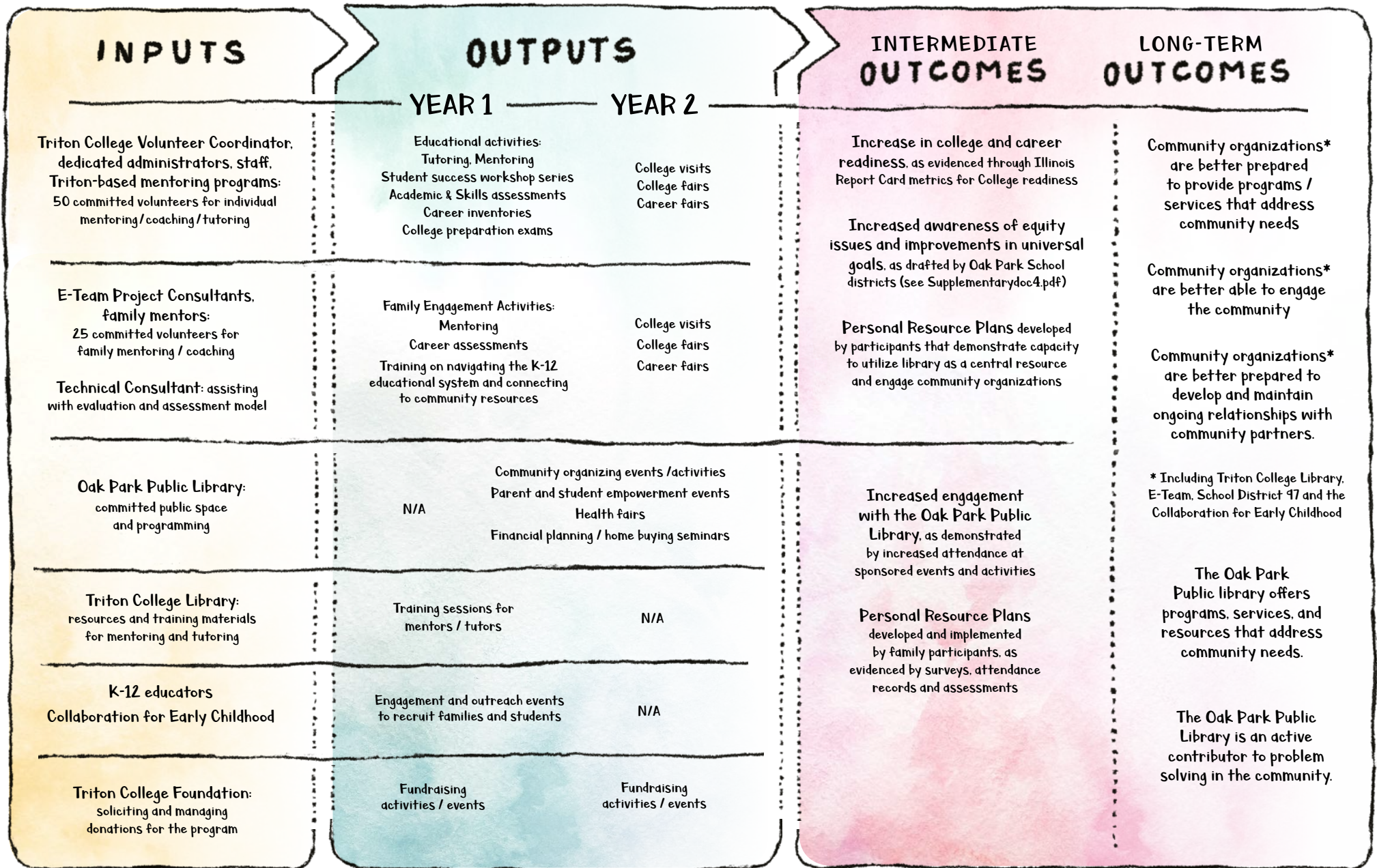
• **Plan a longer project**

“I think I would have suggested going through all 24 months or potentially a little longer. By the time we wrapped our brains around what we said we were going to do not necessarily what we wanted to do, and kind of that abstract concept, we ran out of time. The race was over and we were just getting going. It would have been neat to see how much farther we could have taken things. Because the last 6-8 months of our grant were pretty outstanding.”

**The Triton team’s advice to others in using a logic model in their work to catalyze community:**

“When you’re planning this out, invite as many people to the table as you can. Have the conversations and the round tables and the guiding questions to . . . allow the community to really identify what the issues are beyond a handful of people. [Have] open forums to say, ‘OK, we’re looking at this grant. It’s not a lot of money but we need a lot of people,’ and, ‘Is there one area of community advancement or community development that we can all agree on that we want to focus on?’ And then, discuss how we all can contribute to that.”





## TO LEARN MORE: