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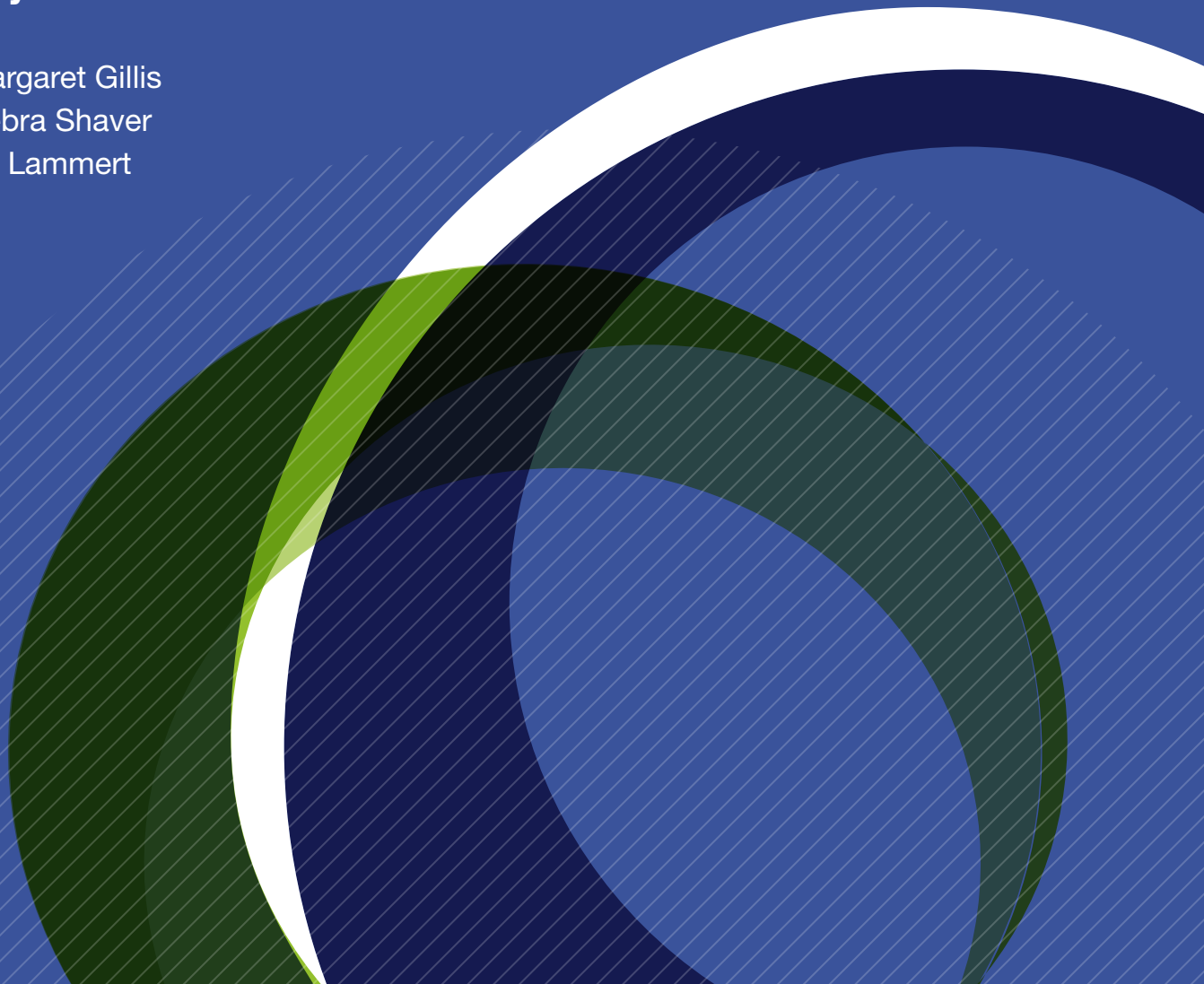
Linking Expectations to Evaluations: Using Your Logic Model to Create Your Evaluation Plan

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INTRODUCTION

This brief provides guidance and examples for creating strong alignment between project evaluation plans and logic models. The project logic model graphically displays the project investments, planned activities, and expected results. It guides a project's design and implementation and can provide the foundation for a strong evaluation plan. Whereas a theory of change or theory of action may depict complex relationships and confounding factors, the logic model generally provides a more linear, simpler depiction of the process of change expected. The evaluation plan is the blueprint for assessing how well the project components have been implemented and analyzing the extent to which project objectives and outcomes have been achieved. An evaluation plan that is aligned to your logic model will help you target evaluation resources and focus your energy.

For more specific information about developing a logic model or evaluation plan, see the CIPP resources listed at the end of this document. This document can be used in conjunction with those resources to ensure your logic model and evaluation plan are aligned, accurately reflect your project, and are of high quality.

PURPOSE OF THE EVALUATION PLAN

Evaluation results provide important (and often required) information about project results (summative evaluation) and feedback for continuous improvement, enabling you to adjust project resources and activities as needed (formative evaluation). This information can be useful to project leaders, decision-makers, and funders throughout the life of the project.

Evaluation plans include components such as:

Outcomes: the expected short-, medium-, and long-term outcomes from the logic model

Evaluation questions: the questions you are trying to answer to understand whether the project is being implemented as planned and outcomes are being achieved

What's the difference between a formative and a summative evaluation?

Formative evaluation is used to provide feedback to the project as it is being carried out. The formative evaluation examines how the project is being implemented, as well as short-term and medium-term outcomes of the project. This information can be used to examine immediate impacts and make adjustments as needed. Formative evaluation can also provide information about progress toward achieving long-term outcomes.

Summative evaluation provides a picture of what has been accomplished throughout the lifespan of the project and whether the intended short-term, medium-term, and long-term outcomes have been met. It includes activities to assess whether and to what degree change occurred in the target population as a result of project or program activities.

Performance targets: the unit of information that will tell you whether your objectives or outcomes were achieved

Methodology: the nuts and bolts of how the data will be collected, including data sources, data collection methods and instruments, data management, data analysis, and reporting

Timeframes and responsibilities: a timeline for the overall evaluation project as well as timelines and personnel for specific evaluation events such as data collection, analysis and reporting

WHY LINK THE EVALUATION PLAN TO THE LOGIC MODEL?

In short, if the evaluation plan and logic model are misaligned, you will not be able to determine whether project objectives and outcomes were achieved or, equally important, whether results can fairly be attributed to the project activities. For example, first-year evaluation results showing that the project activities were implemented as intended and outcomes were achieved provide evidence supporting the logic model's underlying theories— that implementation of the project strategies and activities is leading to the desired outcomes. Results like these give you some confidence that the project is on track and that the investments of resources and activities are worthwhile. On the other hand, evaluation data revealing that activities are being implemented as planned but outcomes are **not** being realized warrant further investigation and may lead to project adjustments. For example, do you need to revisit the assumptions and theories in the logic model? Are there other strategies that would be more effective in reaching outcomes? Or, are the data collection instruments (e.g., outcome measures such as assessments) not able to measure actual changes in outcomes?

Another reason for good alignment is that the logic model gives you a clear indication of what to measure, helping you plan and use evaluation resources efficiently. Logic models also assist with establishing the sequence of evaluation events—from assessing the resources used to evaluating the long-term project outcomes—and can help you identify important project measurement targets for formative and summative evaluation. For instance, if the acquisition of knowledge is a key short-term outcome required before a medium-term outcome would be expected (e.g., a change in adult behavior), the project could set a target for the short-term outcome to determine if the project is on track to achieve expected results (see performance target example in the sidebar).

HOW CAN YOU LINK YOUR EVALUATION PLAN TO YOUR LOGIC MODEL?

Follow the steps below to create strong alignment between your logic model and evaluation plan.

1. **Start with the logic model.** In general, if a project element (an activity, output, or outcome) is important enough to be in the logic model, consider including it in the evaluation. However, it is likely not practical to evaluate everything in the logic model. Go to step 2 to prioritize what will be included in the evaluation.

Performance Target Example

Short-term Outcome: Increased practitioner knowledge of evidence-based family engagement practices.

Performance Target: 85% of training participants will achieve a score of at least 80% correct on the post-training knowledge test.

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2. Select the elements that will be included in the evaluation.

To conduct a meaningful evaluation within project resources and capacity, identify key activities, outputs, and outcomes from the logic model to evaluate. Focus on identifying the essential information needed to inform continuous improvement and demonstrate project impacts. Use the questions below to decide which parts of the logic model will be addressed by the evaluation plan.

What are the most critical elements of the logic model— What must happen for the outcomes to be achieved and the goals of the project to be met? Think about the links in the logic model that are critical to the causal flow and try to evaluate those. For instance, a project may implement professional development or technical assistance activities, such as training and coaching, with an intended long-term outcome of improving children's social-emotional development. To achieve the long-term outcome, participants in the professional development or technical assistance activities must demonstrate skills related to practices that support the social-emotional development of children with high needs. Assessing participants' mastery of these skills would provide critical information about the effectiveness of the training and the likelihood of reaching the long-term child outcome.

Which outcomes are most important to the project, funders, and other stakeholders? It may not be feasible to collect information on all outcomes. Are some outcomes more important than others? If evaluation resources are limited, select the most important long- and medium-term outcomes for the evaluation plan and be sure to measure those.

Which logic model elements are easy to measure? Some evaluation measures do not require a lot of resources or effort. Using web analytics, for example, can be a simple method for assessing the extent to which website materials are being used. Counts of participants at meetings and trainings are also easy to gather. If it is in the logic model, important to the success of the project, and easy to measure, include it in the evaluation plan.

What existing data sources do you have to evaluate logic model elements? Leverage existing data sources and processes to use evaluation resources efficiently. For example, if you regularly survey project participants or clients, use or adapt the survey to assess elements of the logic model. Similarly, use key assignments in courses to assess scholar knowledge in personnel development projects rather than conducting additional data collections.

What are the resources and expertise you have for the evaluation? Consider the staff time it will take to develop and administer measures, data collection protocols, and processes, as well as to collect and analyze data. You may need to match

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Logic Model Components

Inputs:
what you invest (e.g., staff, time, money, technology, stakeholders)

Activities:
what you do (e.g., develop/ implement programs, develop products and resources, assess, train, collaborate, disseminate)

Outputs:
what you produce (e.g., number of activities conducted, fidelity of activities conducted, number of participants, characteristics of participants)

Short-term Outcomes:
what the short-term results are (e.g., quality/relevance/ usefulness of activities conducted, learning – awareness, knowledge, attitudes, skills)

Medium-term Outcomes:
what the medium-term results are (e.g., action – practice, behavior, decision- making, organizational change)

Long-term Outcomes:
what the ultimate impacts are (e.g., conditions – educational, social, economic, civic, environmental)

the evaluation activities to the skills and resources available. For example, if you have staff expertise with online survey platforms (e.g., Survey Monkey, Qualtrics), or staff with experience collecting qualitative data through interviews and focus groups, you may choose to focus on those evaluation methods. You may also need to prioritize the evaluation activities that are most critical for achieving project outcomes or consult with outside experts to assist with developing measures.

The answers to these questions will help you identify the information you need to assess progress and demonstrate results without engaging in evaluation activities that are not useful or that are overly taxing on project resources.

3. **Determine the evaluation methodologies.** For each logic model element selected in step 2, identify the data sources, measures, and data collection and analysis procedures that will be used (see the resources at the end of this brief for useful templates). For some elements, you might want to use more than one data source. As an example, to assess the quality of training, you might have an expert review the training materials with a document review protocol and ask participants to rate the quality of the training through a survey. As you plan for the evaluation, consider ways to conduct a rigorous evaluation within project resources by leveraging existing structures. For example, you may be able to use part of a standing meeting with stakeholders to conduct a focus group or use supervisory structures to conduct observations.

4. **Align language between the evaluation plan and logic model.** Ensure the language in the evaluation matches the language in the logic model so that the evaluation method aligns with what you are intending to measure. For example, if your medium-term outcome in the logic model relates to increased use of specific practices by practitioners, the language and methods in the evaluation should address **use** of the specific practices and not something else, such as increased knowledge or confidence. Also, make sure that you are consistent with terminology across both documents. For example, if you characterize a professional development activity as coaching in your logic model, call it coaching in your evaluation plan, as opposed to consultation or some other characterization.

5. **Specify the timeline, persons responsible.** For each of the data collection activities identified in step 3, determine the timelines for developing, pilot testing, and revising the instruments (if necessary); collecting data and ensuring they are accurate and complete; preparing data for analysis, and analyzing data often enough to inform project progress. Determine who will be responsible for each activity.

EXAMPLE: ALIGNMENT OF A LOGIC MODEL AND EVALUATION PLAN

On the following page, **Figure 1** is an example of an abbreviated project logic model with aligned evaluation components, including evaluation questions, performance targets, and measures that are aligned to each element in the logic model.

Figure 1 demonstrates how the elements in each logic model component map on to the evaluation. Each component has associated evaluation activities, and the evaluation allows you to determine whether the project is on target and outcomes are being achieved. In Appendix A, we offer examples to help you think through the alignment of your logic model and evaluation plan.

Figure 1. *Example Abbreviated Logic Model and Aligned Evaluation Measures – Parent Training and Information Center*

|	Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Outcomes		
				Short-term	**Medium-term**	**Long-term**
Logic Model Elements	Families Funding PTI staff Technical assistance (TA) providers State and local educational staff	Provide online and in-person training for parents Provide individual TA to parents	Number of online and in-person training sessions Number of parents participating in training and individual TA	Increased parental knowledge of the nature of their child's disabilities, their rights under the IDEA, and special education systems (Please note that this outcome actually includes three separate outcomes. Therefore, the evaluation will need to include measures for each outcome to answer the evaluation questions listed.)	Increased parental ability to help their child succeed, navigate special education systems, and use effective modes of collaboration with educators (This outcome, too, includes three outcomes that will need to be measured separately.)	Parents and educators collaborate to provide improved services to children with disabilities
Evaluation Questions	What is the total monetary investment in the project? What is the total staff full-time equivalent (FTE) applied to the project?	What TA activities are implemented, changed, and/or added? What successes and challenges are experienced?	How many online and in-person training sessions are held? How many parents participate in online and in-person training sessions and individual TA?	What percentage of participating parents have increased knowledge of the nature of their children's disabilities, their rights under IDEA, and special education systems?	What percentage of participating parents are better able to help their children succeed, navigate special education systems, and use effective modes of collaboration with educators?	What percentage of participating parents collaborate with teachers to provide improved services to children with disabilities?
Performance Targets	Actual monetary investments do not exceed planned investments	All planned activities are implemented or are modified to better meet the needs of parents	12 online and 5 in-person trainings are held 100 parents receive individual TA	85% of participating parents report increased knowledge of the nature of the child's disabilities, their rights under IDEA, and special education systems	85% of participating parents report an increase in the number of strategies they can use to help their child succeed and an increased ability to navigate the special education system and use effective modes of collaboration with educators	Compared to when they received TA 9 months earlier, 80% of participating parents achieve a 5-point increase on a survey focused on collaboration
Methodology: Data Sources/ Measures	Budget/financial reports Staff FTE reports	List of project activities planned, completed, and changed Focus groups of staff members and parents	List of online and in-person trainings completed Training attendance sheets List of parents receiving individual TA	Parent survey Interviews with a subset of participating parents	Parent survey Interviews with a subset of participating parents	Parent survey on parent-teacher collaboration administered at first training or TA and 9 months later

Note: Examples are drawn from a logic model created for a fictional Parent Training and Information Center and have been edited or abbreviated for the purposes of this figure.

GRANT-TYPE SPECIFIC EXAMPLES

In Appendix A, we provide examples for different types of OSEP-funded projects, such as technical assistance and dissemination, personnel development, parent centers, and educational technology projects. The examples are intended to help you see how you may take an element from your logic model and address it in your evaluation. These examples are not exhaustive but provide a starting place for thinking through evaluating each logic model component in general and for each grant type. Select each component in the logic model in Figure 2 to jump to guidance about addressing that component in the evaluation plan.

Figure 2. Logic Model Components — Links to Example Evaluation Questions and Measures

Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Outcomes–Impact		
			Short-Term	Medium-Term	Long-Term
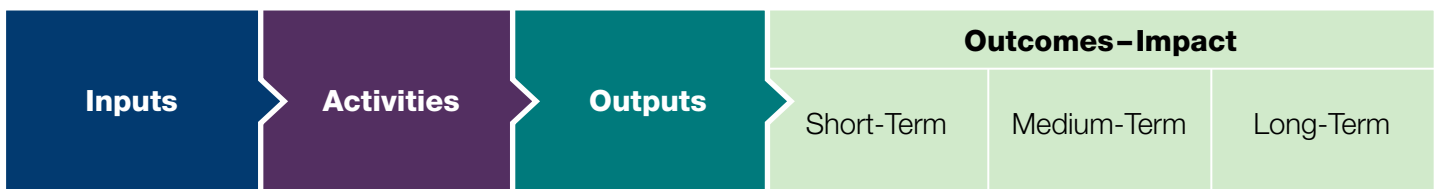
The hyperlinks above go to the corresponding tables in **Appendix A**.

CONCLUSION

Strong alignment between the project logic model and evaluation helps to ensure key aspects of the project are evaluated and encourages efficient use of project resources for evaluation. Use the questions outlined above to think through decisions to create a rigorous evaluation plan that can be conducted within project resources. Match language in the evaluation plan to language in the logic model so you measure what you are intending to measure. Include critical components of the logic model in the evaluation and build in both formative and summative evaluation to gather information that is useful for project leaders and decision-makers throughout the project. As you examine your logic model and evaluation plan to ensure tight linkages, you also may discover that the logic model needs to be refined to more clearly reflect the project activities, outputs, and outcomes.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

The resources below provide additional guidance on developing logic models and evaluating projects. The Logic Model Outline presents definitions and examples of the components of a logic model. The Grantee Guide to Performance Measurement offers guidance on establishing project performance measures for reporting to OSEP. Demonstrating Evidence across the Project Cycle provides considerations and guidance on planning the evaluation for all phases of the project. The Evaluating Special Education Programs: Resource Toolkit provides comprehensive guidance and resources on evaluation.

Logic Model Outline https://osepideasthatwork.org/sites/default/files/CIPP2_Logic_Model_Outline_03-13-15.pdf

Grantee Guide to Performance Measurement https://osepideasthatwork.org/grantee-guide-project-performance-measurement

Demonstrating Evidence across the Project Cycle https://osepideasthatwork.org/webinar-series/demonstrating-evidence-across-project-cycle-new-resource-osep-staff-and-grantees

Evaluating Special Education Programs: Resource Toolkit https://osepideasthatwork.org/sites/default/files/Evaluating%20Special%20Education%20Programs%20Resource%20Toolkit_Section%20508_12.pdf

Evaluation Resources https://osepideasthatwork.org/evaluation

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APPENDIX A | Examples of Evaluation Questions and Measures/Data Sources, by Logic Model Component

The following tables provide examples of elements from the logic model and associated example evaluation questions, measures, and data sources. Data collection methods, measures, and data sources will vary by project type, focus, activities, and intended outcomes. Examples are provided that apply to all types of grants, as well as examples specific to the following OSEP-funded grant types: Technical Assistance and Dissemination (TA&D); Personnel Development to Improve Services and Results for Children with Disabilities (PDP); Parent Training and Information Centers (Parent); and Educational Technology, Media, and Materials for Individuals with Disabilities (ETechM2). For each logic model component, the overarching question for the evaluation of that component is listed. Use these tables as a starting place for considering possible evaluation questions and data sources/measures to evaluate each component of your project logic model.

INPUTS

Overarching Question: To what extent were inputs put in place as intended?

Grant Type	Example Inputs from Logic Model	Example Evaluation Questions	Example Methodology: Measures/Data Sources
General – may apply to all grants	Project staff	Were project staff qualified to carry out project activities?	• Staff qualifications checklist • Crosswalk of project activities and staff qualifications
	• Project staff • Project budget • Technology	Were the intended resources used and adequate?	• Staff FTE • Budget/financial reports • Catalog of resources used
	• Stakeholders • Consultants	How did partner organizations and individuals contribute to the project?	• List of project partners and description of their involvement in the project

ACTIVITIES

Overarching Question: To what extent were activities implemented as intended?

Grant Type	Example Activities from Logic Model	Example Evaluation Questions	Example Methodology: Measures/Data Sources
General – may apply to all grants	• Conduct literature syntheses • Develop and disseminate products, including briefs, modules, resource documents, and tools • Host webinars, workshops, and trainings • Implement coaching • Conduct intensive technical assistance • Conduct market scan • Identify current and emerging technological capabilities • Develop and disseminate a plan for industry recommendations	Were the planned activities completed?	Checklist of activities planned and completed
		Were products planned for each project year completed?	Checklist of products planned and completed each project year
		What successes to implementation were encountered?	• Interviews/focus groups with key stakeholders about barriers and facilitators • Management tracking system to identify timeline issues
		What barriers to implementation were encountered?	
	Implement an evidence-based model/intervention	To what extent was the model/intervention implemented with fidelity?	Observation or protocol for measuring fidelity of implementation

OUTPUTS

Overarching Question: To what extent are outputs achieved as planned?

Grant Type	Example Outputs from Logic Model	Example Evaluation Questions	Example Methodology: Measures/Data Sources
TA&D	Targeted number of universal, targeted, and intensive TA activities delivered	How many TA activities were implemented? (e.g., universal TA, targeted TA, intensive TA)	Count from list of all TA activities planned and completed by TA type
	Tools and resources produced	What tools/resources were produced?	Count from list of products completed and disseminated
	Trainings and technical assistance are well-attended.	How many people participated in each type of training and technical assistance?	• Number of participants in each of the types of TA activity • Webinar attendance • Training attendance sheets
	Cross-organizational/agency meetings held	• How many cross-organizational/agency meetings were held? • How many other organizations or agencies participated in center meetings?	Count of organizations represented from meeting notes
PDP	Recruitment activities conducted	How many recruitment activities were implemented?	Count from list of recruitment activities
	Scholars enrolled	How many scholars were enrolled in the program?	Scholar administrative records
	Scholars graduated	• How many scholars successfully completed the program? • How many scholars obtained a cumulative GPA of at least 3.5?	
	All scholars are assigned professional mentors.	How many scholars were assigned professional mentors?	Scholar/mentor tracking form
	Courses on evidence-based practices	What courses were offered and taken by scholars?	List of courses offered and taken by scholars
Parent	Practice briefs, modules, and infographics are produced and disseminated.	What tools/resources were produced and disseminated?	List of products completed and disseminated
	Trainings are well-attended.	How many people participated in each training offered?	Training attendance
ETechM2	White papers, infographics, practice briefs, and other products are produced.	What products and resources were produced?	List of products and resources produced
	Training activities on the technology are offered.	What training activities were offered?	List of training activities
	Trainings are well-attended.	How many people participated in trainings?	Training attendance
	At least 5 sites and 10 individuals agree to implement the technology.	How many sites and individuals agreed to implement the technology?	List of participating sites and individuals

OUTCOMES | Short-Term Outcomes

Overarching Questions: To what extent were short-term outcomes achieved? What were the immediate results of project activities?

Grant Type	Example Short-Term Outcomes from the Logic Model	Example Evaluation Questions	Example Methodology: Measures/Data Sources
TA&D	Products and resources are accessed and used.	Are products and resources being used?	• Focus groups about use of products • Web statistics, TA product hit rates
	Clients and experts rate the products and activities as high quality, relevant, and useful.	What was the quality, relevance, and use of the activities implemented?	• Client surveys • Expert ratings
	Participants in training/TA increase their knowledge and skills on the topic that is the focus of the training/TA.	Did participants increase their knowledge and skills?	• Assessment of knowledge and/or skills • Participant surveys
	Training/TA participants are motivated to implement the practice and believe the practice will lead to improved outcomes.	Do training/TA participants agree they are motivated to implement the practice and believe the practice will lead to improved outcomes?	Participant surveys
	TA participants have an increased awareness of what other organizations/agencies do	Do TA participants have an increased awareness of what other organizations/agencies do?	Survey of collaborative members
PDP	Scholars increase their knowledge of evidence-based practices.	Did participants/scholars increase their knowledge of evidence-based practices?	• Scholar successful completion of key assignments • Scholar end-of-course assessments
	Scholars demonstrate implementation of evidence-based practice.	Did scholars demonstrate implementation of evidence-based practice?	Observation of scholars during field experiences
	Scholars are motivated to implement the practices they learn and believe the practices will lead to improved outcomes.	Do scholars agree they are motivated to implement the practices and believe the practices will lead to improved outcomes?	Scholar surveys
	Courses for scholars are high quality	What was the quality of the courses?	• Scholar evaluation of courses • Expert review of course syllabi focused on quality
Parent	Participants in training increase their confidence, knowledge, and skills.	Did participants increase their confidence, knowledge, and skills after training?	Client surveys
	Training participants are motivated to implement the practices they learn and believe the practices will lead to improved outcomes.	Do participants agree they are motivated to implement the practices and believe the practices will lead to improved outcomes?	
	TA products are accessed and used.	Are TA products being used?	Web statistics, TA product hit rates
	Clients rate the quality of the activities as high.	What was the quality of the activities implemented?	Client surveys
	Clients and experts rate the quality, relevance, and usefulness of the resources disseminated as high.	What was the quality, relevance, and usefulness of the resources disseminated?	Client surveys
ETechM2	Participants in project activities increase their knowledge and skills to implement the technology.	Did participants increase their knowledge and skills to implement the technology?	• Survey of participants • Post-training observation to assess skills
	Participants in project activities are motivated to implement the technology and believe the technology will lead to improved outcomes.	Do participants agree they are motivated to implement the technology and believe the technology will lead to improved outcomes?	Participant survey
	Participants in the usability study rate the usability of resources as high.	What is the usability of the resources developed?	Results of usability study

OUTCOMES | Medium-Term Outcomes

Overarching Questions: To what extent were medium-term outcomes achieved? What were the immediate results of project activities?

Grant Type	Example Medium-Term Outcomes from the Logic Model	Example Evaluation Questions	Example Methodology: Measures/Data Sources
TA&D	Participants in training/TA increase their implementation of practices that are the focus of training/TA.	Did training/TA participants increase their implementation of practices that were the focus of training/TA?	• Participant pre-post survey focused on frequency of implementation • Implementation log to record instances of practice use • Observation tool
	Target audience members use products developed through the project in their work.	Are target audience members using products in their work?	Participant survey
	TA participants increase their communication across agencies	Do TA participants increase their communication across agencies serving?	• Interviews • Log of communication with multiple agencies
PDP	Scholars who graduate from the program obtain employment in the field upon graduation.	Did scholars obtain employment in the field upon graduation?	Graduate survey
	Scholars who graduate from the program provide high-quality services to children and their families.	Do graduates provide high-quality services to children and their families?	Employer survey
Parent	Parents feel more connected to their communities and better able navigate the special education system.	Do parents feel more connected to their communities and better able to navigate the special education system?	• Parent survey • Parent interviews
ETechM2	Participants in project activities implement the technology.	Did participants implement the technology?	• Participant survey focused on implementation of the technology • Observation of implementation • Log documenting implementation of the technology

OUTCOMES | Long-Term Outcomes

Overarching Questions: To what extent were long-term outcomes achieved? What were the long-term results of project activities?

Grant Type	Example Long-Term Outcomes from the Logic Model	Example Evaluation Questions	Example Methodology: Measures/Data Sources
TA&D	Children and families will have access to high-quality curricula, services, and resources.	Do children and families have access to high-quality curricula, services, and resources?	• Interviews of local practitioners, administrators • Survey of parents • Review of approved curricula
	State and local systems will adopt high-quality practices to serve children with disabilities.	Are systems (e.g., personnel development, data systems) adopting high-quality practices to serve children with disabilities?	• Annual survey of administrative personnel focused on high-quality practices and changes in the system in the past year • Document review of system policies/procedures
	Participants in TA increase their collaboration across organizations/agencies	Do participants in TA increase their collaboration across organizations/ agencies?	• Interviews with organization/ agency administrators • Social network analysis using survey on collaboration • Document review of policies
	Participants in training/TA increase their fidelity of implementation of practices that are the focus of training/TA.	Do participants in training/TA increase their fidelity of implementation of the practices that are the focus of training/TA?	Instrument to measure fidelity of implementation
	Infants, toddlers, children or youth with disabilities demonstrate improved outcomes.	Do infants, toddlers, children or youth with disabilities in states/districts/sites that receive training/TA demonstrate improved outcomes related to the focus of training/TA?	• Student test scores • Infant, toddler, children or youth assessments
PDP	Scholars who graduate from the program will maintain employment in the field for at least 3 years after graduation.	Do graduates maintain employment in the field for at least three years?	• Graduate survey • Employer survey
	Scholars have a positive impact on child outcomes.	Do scholars have an impact on child outcomes?	Child assessment
Parent	Parents and educators collaborate in providing services to children with disabilities.	Do parents and educators collaborate in providing services to children with disabilities?	• Survey of parents and educators • Focus group of parents • Focus group of educators
ETechM2	Accessible educational materials are available on a broad scale.	Are accessible educational materials available on a broader scale than prior to the project?	Review of accessible educational materials available from publishers and other sources
	Children who participate in the technology project will experience improved outcomes.	Are outcomes improving for children who participated in technology project?	• Child assessment • District administrative records (e.g., graduation, attendance)