

Logic Models...Not Just for Big Foundations Anymore

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PASSAGES

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Logic modeling is popular with large foundations, but has not been embraced by many of the smaller ones. One reason is that foundations with few or no staff fear that producing one is complicated and time consuming. It doesn't have to be. And it can be a crucial tool for small asset foundations looking to make sustained impact.

Simply put, a logic model is a systematic, visual way to present a plan with its underlying assumptions and theoretical framework. It helps a foundation ask “What impact do we want to have on the community?” Then you work backwards to figure out what kind of activities need to take place, what kinds of projects need to be supported in order to have that outcome and impact. A logic model can tell an organization’s story and why the organization exists.

The KDK-Harman Foundation, with assets of approximately \$20 million, believes strongly in the value of logic models. They not only use the model for their own work, but also ask each grantee to develop one—and then help them do it. Grantees find the practice makes it easier to plan, implement, evaluate, and communicate their programs.

This *Passages* will help you understand how to incorporate logic models in your own decision making process by following the example of how one foundation uses this practice both in its overall strategy and daily activities.

The Story of One Foundation’s Journey Using a Logic Model

The KDK-Harman Foundation is a four-year old foundation based in Austin, Texas. Grantmaking has grown from \$90,000 initially to just over \$1 million in 2008. The foundation’s funding priorities center on “breaking the cycle of poverty in Central Texas through education while promoting a culture of giving excellence,” says founder Janet Harman. She believes that education success will bring economic success, not only to individual families, but to the region. “Education is an essential



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means towards achieving financial independence and enabling a better life for families and their future generations,” Harman explains. “A better educated society will result in lower crime rates, a reduction to the burdened healthcare system, and increased economic productivity.”

In its theory of change, the foundation articulates a strategy “to inspire educational success, financial independence and life-long learning and service.” The board and staff of KDK-Harman are committed to deepening their knowledge of the education field to become more strategic grantmakers and optimize their impact in the communities the foundation serves. This shared core value served as the impetus to exploring strategic giving models and, ultimately, the development of the foundation’s giving methodology.

Before starting her foundation in 2004, Harman had an engineering career. But when her children were young, she decided to “retire” from the workforce and focused on her family and her philanthropic efforts. Her three children—Kevin, David, and Kelly—provided the initials for the KDK-Harman Foundation.

Initially the foundation funded direct service programs focused on academic success. Over time, the foundation shifted to providing programmatic and operational support coupled with hands-on technical support. Today it incorporates into its grantmaking strategy the engagement and support of systemic change through advocacy efforts. The foundation’s grantmaking evolved and matured as the staff and board members became more engaged in educational issues facing Central Texas.

“Part of being a philanthropist is to bring people along in your vision,” says Harman. “Instead of only writing checks, if you want to engage change over the long-haul, it is necessary to get out into the community and get involved.”

When it started, the foundation had some general ideas about education strategies targeted to breaking the cycle of poverty. However, the logic model process forced them to delve deeper into research on the educational landscape of Central Texas. Through this process, the foundation

identified both opportunities and barriers to change. Harman’s background in engineering and business strategy fueled her keen interest in logic modeling after years of practice “using flow charts, arrows and analysis” in her work. At the end of the logic modeling process, she and her board were able to articulate what they believe and how they hoped to bring about change.

APPLYING LOGIC MODELS TO THE FOUNDATION’S WORK

Prior to the legal establishment of the foundation, Harman had participated in national philanthropy conferences and attended seminars about strategic and focused giving. Although the content fit her personal style and offered a structured way of giving, the panelists all came from large foundations, and their processes had a level of sophistication beyond the scope of a small family foundation with few or no staff.

Determined that logic models could be adapted to foundations KDK-Harman’s size, Harman sought the help of the University of Texas at Austin’s RGK Center for Philanthropy and Community Service. She contracted with a graduate intern who possessed both the theoretical background of logic modeling and experience in program evaluation. The intern’s focus was to facilitate and document the board’s discussions of giving priorities and capture the values and core beliefs of the foundation with a visual representation of a logic model.

Throughout a process of three months, the intern’s work consisted of:

- Coaching the foundation’s leadership and staff on the theory and practice of logic models and applicability to their work
- Identifying the alignment between the foundation’s objectives, activities, and intended results
- Capturing the underlying set of assumptions about how KDK-Harman planned to achieve its stated aims
- Identifying the relationships between project activities and evaluation activities

KDK-Harman Foundation’s Theory of Change

The KDK-Harman Foundation’s Theory of Change is developed from its overall mission: to break the cycle of poverty through education while promoting a culture of giving excellence.

In this we strive toward our vision of:

- *Serving economically disadvantaged Central Texas families, especially women, to help them achieve educational success*
- *Transforming their lives from poverty to financial independence and enabling a better life for future generations*
- *Providing financial and capacity building resources to education focused nonprofits and schools*
- *Creating a culture of giving excellence in our community through leadership, high-engagement, advocacy, and innovation*

Through one-on-one interviews with Harman and a series of roundtable discussions with the founder, the foundation’s board, and the executive director, the intern gathered enough data to begin charting the work, resources and planned efforts of the foundation. At the conclusion of the internship, the intern had produced both a logic model and written statement—a theory of change—about the values and principles on which the foundation’s work was based.

The logic model is a concrete pillar to what the KDK-Harman Foundation does on a daily basis. It helps board and staff examine whether or not its intervention is catalytic and if there are other inputs that might be necessary for the outcomes the foundation projects. The logic model is dynamic and revised periodically to adapt to changes in the education environment. “The internal use of the logic model is similar to a guidepost, assisting us with screening programs, testing them against our logic model and ideas; and ultimately, making our selection for processing grant proposals much easier and much more straightforward.”

Input	Activities	Outputs	Outcomes	Impact
Financial Resources (~\$20 million)	Grantmaking	Over \$1 million in grants in 2008	Improvements in: reading, writing, math & science	Decrease in poverty rate in Central Texas
Staff (2 PT/1 intern) • Executive Director • Grantee Consultant	High-engagement partnership (grantmaking process & grantee consulting)	Grantees expand service reach	Increase in high school graduation rates	Increase in economic status of the Central Texas region
Knowledge Base (board, staff & network)	Cross-Sector Networking & Convening	Funded programs are replicated	Increase in college acceptance & graduation rates	Generational improvement in educational achievement
Community Partners	Public Policy Engagement		Increase in wages and marketable skills	
KDK-Harman Foundation Logic Model				

During the application process, the foundation's executive director provides coaching on logic models to communicate an organization's program and goals.

Logic Modeling as a Living Document

KDK-Harman's logic model is reviewed annually. One of the most recent adaptations was at the beginning of 2008. At the foundation's annual retreat, Harman and her staff reviewed their past year's efforts, and worked towards further refining their mission statement to include "promoting a culture of giving excellence" and to explicitly add the activities of consulting and convening to the foundation plan. Consulting and convening were things they already did, but this was not illustrated in their plan. Similarly, "promoting a culture of giving excellence" was a new addition to help the foundation's commitment to sharing their experiences and lessons learned with other foundations.

Although the changes may seem minor, the foundation feels they are important. "First, refining the logic model speaks to accountability and commitment to the actions and decisions we make," Harman says. "Second, in an effort to be transparent and clear on our objectives and priorities, the logic model helps us communicate our role in education grantmaking in Central Texas." Both of these actions speak directly to the open partnership KDK-Harman looks to foster with nonprofit service providers, funder colleagues and other community stakeholders.

Logic Modeling Support

After the KDK-Harman Foundation implemented their logic model, Harman began sharing their experiences with both fellow funders and nonprofit agencies. In the fall, 2008, she was invited to be a panelist at the Conference of Southwest Foundations, to help other small foundations learn how to use the tool to structure

and sharpen their grantmaking focus. In early 2009, she made a similar presentation as part of the National Center for Family Philanthropy's teleconference series. Her efforts fit with the foundation's high engagement and capacity building approach to philanthropy.

Grantees benefited, too. KDK-Harman staff provided hands-on technical assistance to those grantees interested in developing and/or refining a logic model. For example, the foundation's grant application was changed to assist potential grantees in organizing and structuring their funding proposals in a manner that illustrates logic modeling. During the application process, the foundation's executive director provides coaching on logic models to communicate an organization's program and goals. A direct outcome of this coaching is use of the logic model depiction on the foundation's grant application.

In addition to receiving support during the grant application process, funded organizations of KDK-Harman are extended support through KDK-Harman Grantee Consulting. The consulting arm of the foundation was created to build upon the strength of their grantor/grantee relationships and to help nonprofits overcome organizational challenges. KDK-Harman Grantee Consulting helps facilitate organizational growth and strength, but does not dictate strategy.

The primary role of the foundation's second staff member, the grantee consultant, is to work with the foundation's current grantee portfolio to provide capacity building services; logic model development is one of an array of services offered.

As one grantee put it, "The most important learning piece of the logic modeling is that we can now tell our story in a very clear, concise way so that people can comprehensively understand all of our agency's activities."

The table on the next page summarizes discussions and actions with two grantees, including technical assistance provided by the capacity building arm of the foundation, called KDK-Harman Grantee Consulting:

As illustrated in the chart, both Grantee A and Grantee B had initial proposals that differed from the end grantmaking decision to fund operational support.

	Grantee A	Grantee B
Initial Grant Request	Project request to expand the number of students served	Project request to expand reading program
Foundation Assessment	Need to enhance programming and strengthen case management, not expand number of students served	Need for increased development capacity before expansion takes place
Grantmaking Decision	Operating grant to support operations instead of a project expansion grant	Operating grant to support the salary of a development director for one year
Technical Assistance provided by KDK-Harman Grantee Consulting	Continued discussion on logic model development and how this practice can benefit agency's strategy Shared practical literature to highlight and inform agency board Shared outlets for pursuing support on the development of a logic model	Coached management the theory and practice of logic models and applicability to their work Facilitated staff discussions on core values, agency objectives and projected plans of action Collaborated with program staff to ensure alignment of logic model with existing evaluation measures Created customized visual and narrative logic model summary for agency

In the case of Grantee A, the executive director and his team were encouraged to thoroughly think through their proposed plan to assess and improve their programming and to focus on the organization's overall goals and both short-term and long-term outcomes that would indicate success.

Grantee A's logic model helped it identify and plot its projected outcomes. The conversations with KDK-Harman led the board to consider working with a third-party evaluator to analyze all their data for the first time. Through this exchange, KDK-Harman became intimately familiar with the current and projected activities of Grantee A, and Grantee A appreciated the thoughtfulness, diligence and flexibility this type of process enabled with a funding partner.

KDK-Harman's on-staff consultant partnered with Grantee B's management staff to construct their agency's logic model. This partnership included a series of facilitated discussions and several iterations of the logic model that guided the agency staff in clearly articulating their intention, case and plans for

program expansion. Grantee B plans to use its new logic model in several ways: as a strategic tool for board discussions, as an internal document to orient staff and volunteers about the agency's activities, and as a marketing tool to share with the larger public.

Beginning in 2009, in order to respond to the organizational needs of its grantee partners, KDK-Harman began funding general operating requests. In these types of grants, staff works closely with grantees in using their logic models to identify organizational indicators that can point to the impact of general operating support. The logic model in these grants serves as an assessment tool for tracking progress of operational goals as well as promoting learning and continuous improvement.

In sum, logic modeling has assisted KDK-Harman in the entire process of how they approach grantmaking. The foundation views this practice not only as a capacity building tool that benefits both the grantee partner and funder relationship, but also assists agency planning and articulation of a well developed plan of action.

HOW LOGIC MODELS CAN BENEFIT A FOUNDATION'S GIVING

The KDK-Harman Foundation began this practice as a way to spark focused discussion on grantmaking goals and the intended outcomes of their support and involvement in education-related issues. The process of developing the model:

- Led the foundation board and staff to thoroughly vet their assumptions of the education landscape;
- Illuminated their organizational values and beliefs;
- Helped them identify realistic efforts that aligned with their asset and staff size.

What initially began as a huge spectrum of potential funding areas slowly was narrowed down to a realistic action plan of funding efforts. “We became convinced that the best way to be effective was to limit ourselves to core educational issues and to become as informed as possible about them,” Harman explained.

Additionally, KDK-Harman’s logic model proved to be an effective way to communicate their grantmaking priorities to the larger public. For external purposes, KDK-Harman uses its logic model to be transparent in their funding priorities and decisions. The model also is used internally by staff and board leadership as a way to stay accountable to their stated and deliberate intentions.

REFLECTING, LEARNING & MOVING FORWARD

Harman and her team are pleased with how their deliberative approach to grantmaking has unfolded. Through this process, the board and staff have learned to articulate their values, actions and expectations. Harman believes that while there is a level of sophistication to strategic giving, “the major components are commitment, discipline and focus on working (and adapting) one’s philanthropic plan. Contributions at any level make a impact. The key to maximizing that impact is deliberate thoughtfulness about deploying your giving strategy.”

To read more about KDK-Harman Foundation and the framework attributed to its activities, visit www.kdk-harman.org (section: About Us) to view detailed depictions of its logic models for Grantmaking, Grantee Consulting and Advocacy activities. All of the aforementioned programmatic models align with the larger, organizational goal and intentions of KDK-Harman Foundation.

Resources:

Using Logic Models to Bring Together Planning, Evaluation and Action: Logic Model Development Guide, updated January, 2004, W.K. Kellogg Foundation www.wkff.org.

The Innovation Network has Web-based tools and resources for evaluation, including a logic model development tool. www.innonet.org.

The KDK-Harman Foundation website, kdk-harman.org, has a knowledge center with many additional resources on such topics as logic models and program evaluation.

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