U.S. Department of Education
Office of Elementary and Secondary Education
Charter Schools Program
Recording Transcript – May 2024
FY 2024 CSP State Entity Logic Models and SMART Performance Measures Webinar

Logic Model

This video is intended to help prospective Charter Schools Program applicants with preparing two key parts of their applications, creating the logic model and developing SMART performance measures. This session has three primary objectives. The first, to introduce interested applicants to some of the requirements of the Notice Inviting Applications (also referred to as the NIA) specific to logic models and performance measures; the second, to provide strategies for developing a logic model for a CSP application; and the third, to explain the components of SMART performance measures within the context of CSP grants.

Although State Entity, Developer, and Charter Management Organization grant programs represent distinct and separate grant programs with different eligibility criteria, the request for a logic model and to include performance measures is common across all programs. Federal code 34 CFR 77.1 defines what is meant by a logic model. Per the NIA, the logic model should be specific to the CSP grant project and include the objectives intended to be achieved with the grant funds.

Thus, the logic model in the application should be tailored to the grant application and not a general or overall logic model for the applicant organization. Performance measures define what you intend to accomplish with grant funds and serve as a metric, or benchmark, showing how progress toward grant objectives are being met. Logic models and performance measures should be aligned and connected, which is why these two topics are being presented together.

Developing a logic model can help applicants think about what they plan to achieve with a CSP grant and thinking through performance measures can aid in the development of a logic model. We will first cover logic models, discussing what they are and providing strategies for how to develop a strong logic model for a CSP grant application.

First, we will begin with defining a logic model. Essentially, a logic model is a graphic representation of a project that presents the key components of the project typically in a linear format. Logic models help to visually tell the story of the project to be implemented by displaying the relationships between the proposed activities and desired outcomes. Ideally, the flow between elements is clear, so you do not need a miracle to occur to reach your desired outcomes.

When the logic or key components of the project are missing from the logic model, it may leave one wondering how the goals of your project will be achieved. A tip here is to keep your logic model to one page and make sure it is easily understood. This leads us to the components of a good logic model.

A clearly presented logic model shows the progression of a project from the resources provided by the organization—such as the people, policies, tools, and partnerships—through implementation of the project activities, resultant outputs, and the outcomes expected to be achieved. In their most basic format, logic models present the flow of the project along with external factors and underlying assumptions.

It should be noted that logic models are living documents that should be revisited regularly. Let's take a deeper dive into each of these components. Inputs are the assets that your organization brings to the table when implementing a project. These can include people, facilities, funding, partnerships, and materials you already have. Look at the staff who will be working on the project and what they bring. Think about their roles and contributions. Also, think beyond the current staff you have at the organization and consider staff who may be hired if the grant is funded.

Facilities include the buildings, assets, and space to which you already have access. This may include training, meeting, or conference space that is relevant to your proposed project. It may also include office space, regional offices, or shared space you will have access to for the grant period. CSP grant funds may be included as a resource. In addition to grant funds, consider other funding sources that may be needed to implement your project. These could include foundation funding, matching funds, other grants, or general agency funds that cover costs associated with implementing the grant.

Partners will be those subcontractors, consultants, or community partners who will help with implementing one or more components of your grant-funded project. This should be limited to those external people or organizations that will help with implementing the grant or carrying out grant-funded activities. A tip here is to think about the role key partners will play in helping you implement your grant.

Materials are the tangible assets you have already developed. That is key for the inputs. The materials listed here should already exist or be things you would develop in the first few months to be used throughout the grant. This may include professional development materials, training guides, requests for applications, peer review training materials, and monitoring guides.

Thinking about inputs is a great opportunity to take stock of what you have and what you may need to successfully implement your grant-funded project. Do you need to hire someone? Do you have someone experienced with implementing federal grants? Do you have the financial system in place to account for grant funds? Do you need more office space? How will you pay for the expenses not covered by the grant? Will you need to print training materials? Do you need meeting space to offer authorizer technical assistance? Reflecting on the inputs can help you assess organizational readiness to take on a federal grant. It may be helpful to pause the recording here, and take some time to reflect on what you need to be successful.

Activities are the specific processes or actions that will be performed as a part of the grant-funded project. Because activities are actions to be conducted or implemented, they should begin with a verb to indicate an action that will take place. This can also help serve as a project roadmap. Think about all the things you will be doing over the course of this grant. How will grant funds be spent? Take a moment to list out all the activities you and your team will be engaged in, and group them as needed to facilitate their presentation in a logic model.

Once you have listed out all the activities that will be implemented, look back at your inputs and make sure you have everything you need to implement the activities listed. Outputs are products, materials, services, or events produced as a result of one or more activities, in contrast to inputs, which are existing assets

available to your organization prior to starting the project or that will be made available if the grant is funded.

Outputs are new materials and assets developed as a result of the project activities. Outputs can also be thought of as the deliverables of the project. Often, outputs may be presented as products or materials, such as training materials developed or resources produced. Other outputs can be counted, such as the number of application workshops held, the number of peer reviewers trained, the number of authorizer convenings, or the number of hours of technical assistance provided. We have seen prior project logic models that have conflated outputs with outcomes, but these should be treated as distinct components of your logic model. Outputs are what you will produce, but outcomes are what you will achieve.

More specifically, the outcomes are the results and the benefits of the activities and outputs. Outcomes should be written in a way that are measurable, so that it is clear whether the outcomes were achieved, and that they should be realistic based on your state context. They're usually divided into short-term, mid-term, and long-term outcomes. Within the context of CSP grants, short-term outcomes represent quick wins typically achieved in the first year of the grant or something that is achieved annually.

Mid-term outcomes take a bit longer to achieve and often will build upon one or more of the short-term outcomes. These may be achieved in years two or three of the grant. In contrast, long-term outcomes represent results over time, building off the short- and mid-term outcomes to achieve longer-term successes, and ideally, sustainability. When thinking about your outcomes, consider the ultimate goals of your grant-funded project. Often the outcomes in your logic model align with and sometimes are the objectives associated with your performance measures.

Working on the logic model and performance measures in tandem is beneficial and helps ensure alignment between the project activities, objectives, performance measures, and the overall project goals. The previous slides laid out the major components of a logic model. Although this process generates a useful graphic for training the grant-funded project you are proposing, it is helpful to add the external factors and assumptions.

External factors help define the context in which the project will be implemented as well as any factors that could positively or negatively affect implementation. This may include the current or changing charter environment in your state and the external factors typically out of the control of the organization. Assumptions are factors upon which your project is based, such as you are assuming there is a need and a desire for more or expanded charter schools in your state and there is a pipeline for eligible applicants.

These final components are typically added as a box above or below the graphic of the logic model. External factors and assumptions provide a more complete picture of the project. These components provide context for how and why the project may be successful. This step also helps in considering factors that could derail or sidetrack project implementation, so contingency plans can be proactive instead of reactive.

Now that we have explored the individual components, let's put it all together. Logic models should articulate a logical flow from the input to the activities and through the outputs and outcomes. The logic model is a graphic depiction of what you intend your grant implementation to look like. It is informed by external factors that are unique to your context and are driven by some underlying assumptions about what is required for you to achieve your grant objective, also known as a theory of change.

Although this may seem basic or obvious, a review of prior grantee logic models showed many grantee logic models lacked clear connections and a logical flow across the components. Logical connections are typically shown by using arrows indicating which inputs are required to implement which activities, which activities produce, which outputs, and which outputs result in which outcomes.

Color-coding is another method to demonstrate the logic and which components go together. In some cases, there may be a single line linking all the components, whereas in other cases, multiple components may lead to or result from other components, and a project logic model may include both these concepts. One way to help think through the logical progression in the logic model is through if–then statements. This is like a theory of change.

For example, if these resources are applied, then this activity can be implemented. If activity A is implemented, then output A is produced. If output A is produced, then outcome A will be achieved. Using this process to review the logic model serves as one more check to ensure the logical flow is present.

Here's an example of a project logic model for a state entity grantee. Although the text is likely too small to see on the screen, the main components should be visible at the top. Additionally, the full version of this example is available in the Logic Model Toolkit on page 15 that we will link to at the end of this presentation, which is another great resource to help you in developing your logic model. When writing a CSP grant application, you are committing to performing the activities and achieving the outcomes if your application is funded.

The logic model can help you operationalize the proposed project and provide a shared understanding of what the project aims to do and accomplish. One thing to point out here is that the logic model does not need to be one-to-one, such as activity A leads to output A, which leads to outcome A. You likely have multiple activities and outputs that are all leading toward a single outcome or an activity that leads to multiple outcomes. The arrows help show the linkages.

To summarize, the inputs are the existing assets such as the people, partnerships, facilities, and materials that you bring to the grant-funded project. The activities are what you will do and the actions that will be implemented with the grant fund if the grant is awarded. The outputs are the products and materials you will develop and create based on the activities that are implemented. These are often the deliverables of the project and things that can be counted, such as the number of technical assistance webinars hosted or the number of professional development hours offered to teachers.

Outcomes are what you will achieve and are considered the results of your implementation efforts. These are typically measurable and separated into short-, mid-, and long-term outcomes within the scope of your project. Underlying all these components are the external factors and assumptions, which are the conditions under which you work and the factors that may positively or negatively affect your project. Using arrows or color-coding can help the logical flow from one component to the next.

SMART Performance Measures

Now, we are going to shift from logic model to performance measures and specifically SMART performance measures. Before we get into performance measures, we first want to clarify some terms that are often conflated. First, goals. Goals are high-level statements about what will be achieved by the end of your CSP grant. These should be the endgame statements and should align or even be the long-term outcomes identified in your logic model. One thing to note is that these should be specific to your grant-funded projects and not your organizational goals overall, so goals may be more operational, such as getting

subgrants awarded, adding seats in high-quality charter schools, and improving authorizing practices in the state.

Objectives help you define the interim steps and strategies that will help lead to achieving the goals. The objectives help translate the goals into actionable steps and these should align with the midterm and short-term outcomes in your logic model. The objectives must be written into your CSP grant application, and if funded, these objectives are what grantees are held accountable for achieving, so be realistic in what you can accomplish with the grant within the context of your state.

You should have objectives related to the different aspects of your grant. Objectives could be related to topics such as administering subgrants, providing authorizer technical assistance, providing applicant and subgrantee technical assistance, adding high-quality seats, and other things you are trying to accomplish with the grant. Performance measures are the quantitative indicators or metrics that show how you are making progress toward your objective.

Each objective should have roughly three to five associated and aligned measures. In this case, more is not necessarily better and you will need to report on each performance measure annually, so keep to a reasonable number that makes sense for your project. Additionally, each objective must have at least one performance measure that is measured and reported upon each year of your grant. CSP grantees must regularly provide updates to their program officer related to progress on performance measures.

SMART is an acronym, and depending on the context, the letters may stand for something slightly different. For CSP, SMART stands for Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound. Now, we are going to take a deeper dive into each of these.

Specific means the performance measure is clear and concise. It should avoid jargon or terms that are specific to your organization. Everyone reading the performance measure should have a common understanding of what is meant. The who and the what should be clear from reading this statement.

Measurable means quantifiable, preferably using valid and reliable measures and data that can be tracked annually. This does not just mean test scores, but it can be the number of subgrants awarded, number of peer reviewers trained, percent of authorizers that attend convenings, and things like that. The annual performance report that gets submitted to the department each year requires performance measures to be reported on as a whole number, such as the number of convenings held; or as a ratio; or as a percentage, such as the percentage of authorizers in the state who attend at least one convening.

Avoid performance measures that would result in a yes or no response to whether it was met. To help decide if an objective is Measurable, identify the data source that would be used to determine if the measure was met. Think about the baseline data, or where you are before the grant, and annual performance targets that would be used to demonstrate progress.

Achievable here means you are likely to reach or at least get close to reaching the target. These should be stretching your organization to perform better and they should be ambitious. Look at available baseline data and determine what is appropriate growth. If you are already high in an area, it is okay to have a performance measure focused on maintaining that level, such as maintaining at least a 97 percent attendance rate at authorizer meetings. It is also important to be realistic here. Achieving 100 percent participation or doubling the number of charter schools in the state probably are not realistic targets for your performance measures. The key here is to balance ambition and reality.

Relevant means the performance measure is aligned with the project goals and objectives. Do not include performance measures that are not directly related to your grant-funded project. One way to do this is to reference the project logic model to ensure objectives are relevant to the CSP's goals, the grantee's project objectives, and the project's overall theory of action. There should be a clear throughline of how the performance measures relate to the objectives and the objectives to the larger goals.

When we talk about Time-bound, think about what is realistic to achieve and measure within the grant period. Most of your performance measures will relate to something that occurs or can be measured annually. So, if this is the case, say so. You can also include annual targets within a single performance measure. For example, you may plan to award three subgrants in year one, five subgrants in years two and three, and three subgrants in year four and five for a total of 19 subgrants. Be specific about what year of the grant a performance measure will begin to apply and should be reported on.

For each objective, you need at least one performance measure to report on each year, including year one, so keep that in mind as you are drafting performance measures. Also, avoid performance measures that would occur after your grant end. SE grants are for up to five years, so you should not be planning for activities that would occur in year six. Here, we present a six-step process to help in thinking through performance measures.

Step one: determine if the project's proposed logic model aligns with CSP program goals and project objectives. The logic model should clearly demonstrate what critical grant components will lead to the desired project goals and these grant components are your objectives.

Step two: identify objectives. Once your project goals are aligned with your logic model, draft several objectives for each goal that explain how the goal will be achieved over the course of the grant.

Step three: identify metrics. What measures will be used to demonstrate progress toward achieving the objective? Performance measures should use data readily available to the project. The grantee must be able to report on at least one performance measure under each objective annually to demonstrate substantial progress. In the first year of the grant, you will need to review what types of data are available so you can draft proper measures. For example, you may be able to report on the number of authorizer trainings held in year one, but you may not be able to report on how the trainings affected authorizing practices until year three after authorizers had time to implement what was gained from the training.

Step four: provide a baseline measure. Present a baseline measure to serve as the project's starting point to measure success. It may be possible to use the first year of data collected during a grant period as baseline data in some circumstances.

Step five: identify performance targets. Present performance targets for each year of the project to track progress. Given it takes time to ramp up an initiative, projects may want to set lower performance targets and benchmarks in the first year and build toward higher targets subsequently.

Step six: put it all together. Trying to incorporate all five SMART criteria into an objective can easily result in long sentences that fail to effectively convey what will be accomplished.

A strategy for presenting a clear, precise, and concise objective is to incorporate an objective statement into the table. An advantage of this method is so readers can easily identify each criterion, rather than having to sort through a long narrative.

On the following slides, we will be sharing examples of performance measures that are not meeting SMART criteria as well as examples of how they could be improved. These examples were drawn from prior CSP grantees. These are purely intended as examples and your performance measures should be tailored to your specific grant project and context.

Our discussion on each slide will start with the top example under the red banner, which will present issues, followed by the bottom example under the green banner, which represents improvements. The first example presents an objective and performance measures that are a bit vague. Creating a positive authorizing environment could mean different things to different people, nor is it concise when these things will happen.

These performance measures are also not Measurable, so they are missing most of the SMART criteria. In the bottom example, we are working to make it more specific. Now, it becomes clear we are talking about the SE's relationship with the eligible and existing authorizers. It is clear these will be measured annually, so it is Time-bound. The performance measures specifically state how many new authorizers will be added, how many convenings will be held, and an annual percentage of authorizers satisfied with the training.

The revised example also includes baseline data, which helps show if the targets are reasonably achievable. Some grantees will have baseline data from prior years. For some grantees and for some performance measures, you may need to use the first year of your grant to collect baseline data.

A common issue we have seen with performance measures is that they are written in a way that is not Measurable. If a performance measure is written as an activity or written in a way where the answer to whether the measure was met would be a yes, you completed it, or no, you did not, then it is not considered Measurable. In the top example that we might see from a Charter School Support Organization, the CSSO has an outcome for the state education agency to accomplish something.

Be sure the performance measures are something that you can control and accomplish or you have a memorandum of understanding or other agreement in place if you are expecting a partner organization to accomplish something for the grant-funded project. On the annual performance report that grantees submit to their program officer, you must report on performance measures as a whole number, ratio, or percentage.

In the bottom example, for the first performance measure, the grantee would report on the number of convenings they proposed—three in this case—and how many convenings were actually held that year. For the third performance measure, we present the percentage achieved. As you're writing your performance measure, consider how you will report on them each year, what data you already have available, how you will track the necessary data, and any new data you would need to collect.

The first example on this slide shows an objective with unachievable performance measures. It is not realistic that a state entity would be able to get enough schools opened in year one of the grant to increase access from 30 percent to 90 percent. In reviewing performance measures, anytime we see 100 percent, it raises the concern about achievability. In the second example, 25 percent of schools being above the state average is not very ambitious given that the current average is already 48 percent. This grantee would likely greatly exceed the target every year, which is not the point of performance measures.

In the bottom example, you will first see the objective has not changed. The objectives themselves do not need to hit all five SMART criteria, although it can be beneficial if they hit most of them. The key here for

the first performance measure is to get away from the idea of a huge increase in year one, and rather, aim for something more realistic.

For Performance Measure two, it shows the opposite end of the spectrum where the grantee is going from an unambitious 25 percent in the top example to 50 percent meeting or exceeding the state average, which would align with their current school averages. Notice in this example, we are not naming the assessment. We recommend you do not include the name of specific assessment measures and tools as those tools may change over the course of the five-year grant, depending on state and local context. Also, performance measure two is specific to English language arts, and this grantee would likely have a separate performance measure related to math or other content areas. It is recommended you separate out performance measures by content area for clarity and ease of reporting.

When writing performance measures, they need to be relevant to your project and your context. In this top example, the objective is about the state's literacy initiative. It is not clear how the SE may strengthen the state's initiative.

For the first performance measure, we now see a connection to charter schools, but it appears to be for all charter schools in the state and it's likely not something over which the SE has control. It is also not clear what content area the measure applies to, so it may not be relevant to the objective if they are reporting on math.

For the second performance measure, we can now see a focus on grant-funded charter schools and that there is a literacy connection, although it is not clear if teacher certification is connected to the state's literacy initiative and having all teachers certified may not make sense.

Based on this objective and performance measure, can you tell if this is a state entity grantee? Not really. This example is intended to highlight the need for objectives to be aligned with the grant-funded project and the performance measures under that objective should be relevant and related. As we look at the bottom example, we can see clear alignment and relevance to the grant-funded project. Here, the objective states, the grantee is planning to add 7,000 seats with a focus on educationally disadvantaged students.

The first performance measure focuses on the number of seats and provides annual targets. The second performance measure focuses on the educationally disadvantaged part of the objective and presents an annual expectation. The T in SMART stands for Time-bound, and this helps clarify when the performance measure will be achieved. In the topic example, in performance measure one, we do not know if they're awarding 25 subgrants annually or in total, nor do we know when or how often technical assistance will be provided under performance measure two.

In the bottom example, we can see it will be 25 replication subgrants total with the plan to award five each project year. In performance measure two, we see they will also be awarding expansion grants, but only in years two and four of the grant. In the third measure, we see they will have at least three technical assistance webinars per year. It's also important to reiterate that the timing of your performance measures should be within the performance period of your grant. You should not have performance measures that would take several years after the grant closes to determine whether you met them.

Take a moment to pause the recording and read the performance measure on the screen. Consider each of the SMART criteria and determine if this performance measure is SMART. Is the measure Specific? Yes. We know who will be doing what. Is the measure Measurable? Sort of. We know the target is 100 percent, but

depending on how many authorizers are in the state, how will we get the information? A survey, phone call? It may be difficult to collect the data. Is the measure Achievable? No. It would be unrealistic to think that 100 percent of authorizers will share their knowledge at a national conference. You can't make the authorizers attend national conferences, let alone submit a paper to be able to present at a conference.

And even if they are presenting, the topic may not be on effective practices, and if you as a state entity grantee are the only authorizer in the state and you plan to present at a national conference and that is why it is 100 percent, that is highly misleading and you may not be selected to present even if you respond to the calls for papers.

Let's try this again. Take a moment to pause the recording and assess if the performance measure meets the SMART criteria. Is the measure Specific? Yes. We know the focus is on recruiting and training peer reviewers. Is the measure Measurable? Yes. We know the target is at least four per year. Is the measure Achievable? Most likely. It sounds reasonable, although we do not know the specific context of the state or their history with recruiting peer reviewers.

Is the measure Relevant? Yes. Subgrants must be awarded through a peer-reviewed process and training peer reviewers is a requirement. Is this measure Time-bound? Yes. We can see that this will happen annually.

Let's try one last example. Take a moment to pause the recording and assess if this performance measure meets the SMART criteria. Is this measure Specific? Not really. We know that you're looking to increase charter school enrollment, but it is not clear how or when this will be done, especially as a state entity.

Is this measure Measurable? No. This could be answered with a yes or no. Was there an increase in the number of students attending charter school? However, SMART performance measures would define the expected increase with a specific target and present baseline data. Is this measure Achievable? If you think about this in terms of yes or no, it is likely achievable, but without actual numbers or a baseline, it is difficult to tell.

Is this measure Relevant? Grant funds are supposed to be used for the expansion and replication of charter schools. It would be reasonable for grant funds to be used to increase the enrollment of students in charter schools. However, it would be more relevant for performance measures for an SE subgrantee than for the state entity itself. Is this measure Time-bound? No, it is not clear when these might occur.

Now that you have a better sense of how to make objective and performance measures SMART, we want to cover a few specifics within the context of the CST grant. In general, if your grant is funded, you cannot remove an objective or performance measure, nor can you change the target that was approved in your funded application without approval from the department. Changing an objective requires a grant amendment which may not be approved. A common issue we have seen with prior grantees is writing performance measures focused on the results at the end of the grant.

Each objective needs to have at least one performance measure that is measured each year of the grant. This helps program officers make determinations about progress toward meeting the objective. Performance measures should directly relate to your grant-funded project goals and objectives. For each performance measure, it should be clear from the logic model which activity you propose to implement to meet that measure. Once you have written your objectives and performance measures, go back to your logic model and make sure everything is aligned.

The National Charter School Resource Center, which is funded by the Charter Schools Program has produced two associated toolkits, one on logic models and one on SMART performance measures. Both these toolkits are available on the NCSRC website at charterschoolcenter.ed.gov and serve as a resource for prospective applicants. Thank you for watching this recording. Please refer to the NIA and other pre-award offerings to support your application for a CSP grant.