

# Bob Behn's Performance Leadership Report

An occasional (and maybe even insightful) examination of the issues, dilemmas, challenges, and opportunities for improving performance and producing real results in public agencies.



Vol. 10, No. 7, March 2013  
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On why all public executives need to re-introduce

## The Missing Feedback into most Logic Models

Today, if you want to get a grant from a government agency or a foundation, you need a logic model.

To the U.S. Bureau of Justice Assistance, “logic models specify relationships among program goals, objectives, activities, outputs, and outcomes.” To the Urban Institute, “the logic model provides a simplified description of the program, the intended outputs, and the intended outcomes.”

The W. K. Kellogg Foundation describes a logic model as “a picture of how your organization does its work—the theory and assumptions underlying

refined by a total-quality-management team occasionally experiences some glitches. Murphy lurks everywhere. What the German Field Marshall Helmuth von Moltke said about war, “no plan survives contact with the enemy,” applies to all human endeavors. Even if the enemy is not ready—even if there is no enemy—Murphy is ready.

Yet most logic models fail to account for such glitches. Indeed, its neat, linear logic fails to even contemplate the possibility of such glitches.

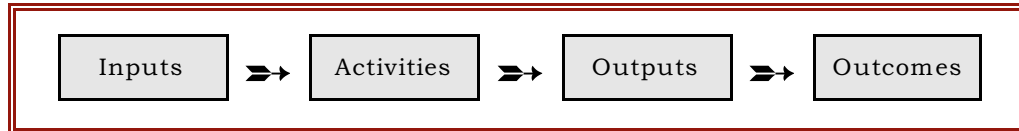
It's like piloting a boat without a

learn by trial and error whether (for your particular house) you should turn it off when the temperature hits 68° or 69° or 70°. Then, unfortunately, whenever you turned on the heat, you would need to keep watching the thermostat to be sure you didn't overshoot your target.

One of the frequently overlooked features of the PerformanceStat leadership strategy is its feedback. Any PerformanceStat with a real potential to improve performance possesses a variety of feedback mechanisms.

Given that the purpose of PerformanceStat is to produce results, the organization needs a lot of data on outcomes, outputs, and activities. It needs data to compare each unit with its own target and with other units with the same responsibilities. These data tell the organization how close it is to achieving its purpose, and (after some analysis and discussion at the meetings) can suggest the adjustments in inputs and activities the organization needs to make.

Any logic model—any description of operations that includes not only the original theory of production but also the mechanisms for continual adjustments—needs a variety of feedback loops. **B**



ing the program.” It “links outcomes (both short- and long-term) with program activities/processes and the theoretical assumptions/principles of the program.”

Indeed, a logic model is a diagram with boxes and arrows. And, although they come in many forms, all illustrate a series of logical connections. Inputs provide the resources for the organization to carry out its activities that then produce the organization's outputs. Finally, these outputs combine with environmental conditions and societal forces to (somehow) produce the desired outcomes.

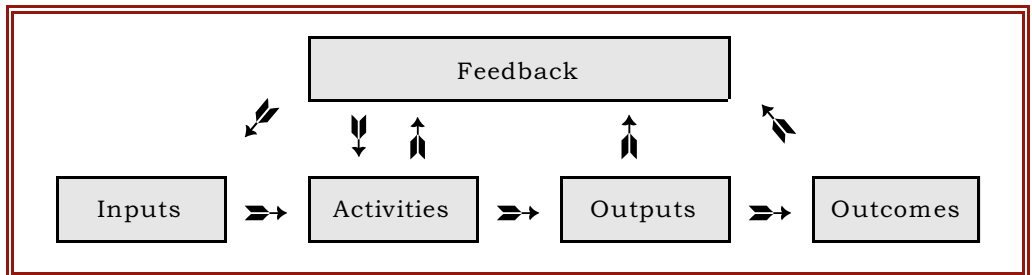
Some logic models distinguish among short-term, medium-term, and long-term outcomes. Some include impacts. Still, the basic framework is clear: Inputs to Activities to Outputs to Outcomes. It is as automatic as Tinker to Evers to Chance.

Indeed, most logic diagrams are quite linear. They seem to be based on an industrial model of production. Inputs provide resources for the manufacturing facility to produce its outputs. Then, the consumers of these outputs turn them into outcomes.

Unfortunately, even a manufacturing process that has been carefully

compass, chart, or GPS. Without any navigational instruments, you have to rely on dead reckoning. To estimate what you have accomplished and thus to determine what you need to do to get to your final destination, you have to rely on your knowledge of where you started, of what you have done, and of the winds, tides, and other outside forces.

This guesstimation is subject to a multitude of errors.



Any effort to accomplish anything requires feedback. Consider the challenge of trying to heat your house without a thermostat. When you are cold, you turn the heat on. But when do you turn it off? Ideally, before it gets too hot. But when is that? After ten minutes? Ten hours? You could hang a thermometer on the wall and

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