U.S. Department of Education
Office of Elementary & Secondary Education
Charter School Programs
FY23 Competition Pre-Application Webinar: Logic Models and
SMART Performance Measures
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This video is intended to help prospective Charter School Programs applicants with preparing two key parts of their applications, creating the logic model and developing SMART performance measures.

This session has three primary objectives:

1 – To introduce interested applicants to some of the requirements in the Notice Inviting Applications, also referred to as the NIA, specific to logic models and performance measures.

2 – To provide strategies for developing a logic model for a CSP application, and

3 – 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 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 that 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 easy to understand. 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 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 if that is relevant to your proposed project. It may also include school sites, existing 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 not include a list of all your community partner organization names' rather, just say community partners and 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. This may include professional development materials, training guides, existing curricula, and a tested model that you plan to expand or replicate.

Thinking about inputs is a good 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 need more office space, how will you pay for expenses not covered by the grant, do you need to print training materials, do you need meeting space? It maybe 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 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 the 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 the logic model. Once you have listed 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 direct 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 workshops held, the number of partnership meetings, the number of teachers hired, or

the number of hours of training provided. We have seen prior 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 it is clear whether the outcomes were achieved. They are 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 overall project goals.

The previous slides laid out the major components of a logic model. Although this process generates a useful graphic portraying 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 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 desire for charter schools in your state or that your school model may work in another state or context. 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 inputs to the activities and through the outputs and outcomes. 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 of these concepts.

One way to help think through the logical progression in the logic model is through if/then statements. 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 is an example of a project logic model for a CMO grantee. It includes clear inputs, activities, outputs, and outcomes, with external factors and assumptions under the model. The goals relate to student performance, matriculation to college, and operations.

To summarize, the inputs are the existing assets, such as 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 funds, 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. Undergirding 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 arrow or color-coding can help the logical flow from one component to the next.

Now we are going to shift from logic models 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 end-game 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 project and not your organizational goals overall, so goals may be more operational such as getting the school opened and operating at full capacity and implementing the school model at scale, or adding seats in high-quality charter schools.

Objectives help 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 mid-term and short-term outcomes of 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. You should have objectives related to the different aspects of your grant. Objectives could be related to professional development, school culture and climate, academics, and implementing aspects of the school model.

Performance measures are the quantitative indicators or metrics that show you are making progress toward your objectives. Each objective should have roughly 3-5 associated and aligned performance 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 the 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 Timebound. 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 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 the 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 schools opened, annual student retention rates, number of partnerships built, and things like that. The annual performance report that gets submitted to ED each year requires performance measures to be reported on as a whole number, such as the number of convenings held, or as a ratio, such as the percentage of students who reach the proficient level in math. Avoid performance measures that would result in a yes/no response that 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 will 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% attendance rate. It is also important to be realistic here. Achieving 100% parent satisfaction or doubling student growth targets are probably 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 models to ensure objectives are relevant to CSP's goals, the grantee's project objectives, and the project's overall theory of action. There should be a clear through-line of how the performance measures relate to the objective and the objectives to the large goals.

When we talk about Timebound, think about what is realistic to achieve and measure within the grant period. Most of your performance measures will be something that occurs annually, so if that is the case, say so. 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 1, so keep that in mind as you are drafting performance measures. Also, avoid performance measures that would occur after your grant ends. If you are replicating a high school with a five-year grant and using a slow-growth model meaning starting with 9th grade and adding a grade each year, by the end of the five-year grant you may have one cohort of high school graduates who went on to college, but certainly would not have any college graduates yet, so you should not have performance measures related to college graduation.

Step 1: 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 2: 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 3: Identify Metrics: What measures will be used to demonstrate progress toward achieving the objectives? 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 have academic achievement data in Year 1, but you may have other assessment data).

Step 4: 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 5: 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 6: 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 precise, clear, and concise objectives is to incorporate an objective statement into a

table. The advantage of this method is so readers can easily identify each criterion rather than having to sort through a long narrative.

One the following slides, we will be sharing examples of performance measure that are not meeting the SMART criteria as well as examples of how they could be improved. These examples were drawn from prior CSP grantees across the different state entity, CMO, and Developer grant programs, so not all examples will be applicable to all grantee types and contexts. These are purely intended as examples and your performance measures should be tailored to your specific project and context.

This first example here presents an objective and performance measures that are a bit vague. Creating a positive environment in schools could mean different things to different people and it is not clear if this will be applied to all schools or only grant-funded schools, or when this 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 grant funded schools. It is clear these will be measured annually, so it is timebound. The performance measures specifically state we will be looking for 80% high-quality educator retention, 95% student attendance, and an annual increase in parent satisfaction. The revised example also includes baseline data, which helps show if your targets are reasonably achievable. Some grantees will have baseline data from prior years, such as from other schools and the like. 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 yes you completed it or no you did not, then it is not considered measurable.

On the annual performance report that grantees must submit to their program officer, you must report on performance measures as a whole number or as a ratio. For the first performance measure, the grantee would report on the number of meetings they proposed, five in this case, and how many meetings were actually held that year. For the second performance measure, the grantee would report the percentage achieved. As you are writing your performance measures, 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 school, no matter how great their program is, will be able to go from a 30% proficiency rate to a 100% proficiency rate. In reviewing performance measures, anytime we see 100% it raises a concern about achievability. In the second example, high schools achieving a 50% graduation rate is not very ambitious. This grantee would likely greatly exceed this target every year, which is not the point of the performance measures.

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In this example, you will first see the objective has not changed. The objectives themselves do not need to hit all 5 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 100% proficiency and rather aim for something more realistic, such as increasing the number proficient by at least 5 percentage points. For performance measure 2, it shows the opposite end of the spectrum where the grantee is looking to achieve an unambitious 50% graduation rate. The revised measure is much more ambitious, aiming to meet or exceed the state average graduation rate.

Notice in this example we are not naming the assessment? We recommend you do not include the name of specific assessment tools as those tools may change. Also, performance measure 1 is specific to math and this grantee would likely have a separate performance measure related to English language arts 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 this has anything to do with charter schools, and this would likely not make sense for a CMO grantee. 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. This may or may not make sense for a state entity grantee, let alone a CMO grantee. 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 there is a literacy connection, although it is not clear if teacher certification in language arts is connected to the state's literacy initiative. Based on this objective and performance measures, can you tell if this is a state entity, CMO, or Developer grantee? Not really. This example is intended to highlight the need for the objectives to be aligned with the grant-funded project, and the performance measures under that objective should be related and relevant.

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 3,000 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 timebound, as this helps clarify when the performance measure will be achieved. In this first example, we do not know when the replication schools will be opened or when the additional seats will be added and to which schools.

In this second example, we can see exactly when the replication schools will be opened, how many high quality seats it will supply, and when the other schools will be expanded.

It is also important to reiterate that the timing of meeting your performance measures should be within your grant period. 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 this measure specific? Yes. We know who will be doing what.

Is this measure measurable? Yes. We know the target is 75% and this data should be readily available for grant-funded schools.

Is this measure achievable? It could be. We don't know what the baseline is for these schools, so can't determine if this measure is achievable.

Is this measure relevant? Yes. Teacher retention has a significant impact on school quality.

Is this measure timebound? No. We don't know when grant funded schools are supposed to achieve a 75% retention rate and if there are targets that grant-funded schools are intended to achieve each year as they progress toward meeting the 75% measure.

Let's try this again. Take a moment to pause the recording and assess if this performance measure meets the SMART criteria.

Is this measure specific? Yes. We know the focus is on grant-funded schools and their graduation rates.

Is this measure measurable? Yes. We know the target is 98% and we know graduation rates for high schools are calculated annually so the data are readily available.

Is this measure achievable? Yes. Given the baseline is 98.4%, it is reasonable to think they can keep the graduation rate that high. If the baseline was 60 or 70%, then we might question if it is achievable.

Is this measure relevant? Most likely. Although we don't know the goals of the grant, we can see it is relevant to replication and expansion, so it is most likely relevant to their grant-funded project.

Is this measure timebound? Yes, we can see this will happen annually.

Let's try one last time with this 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 they are looking at retention and English language learners. However, we do not know if this is all charter schools in the state, or in a network, or two schools, or if it is just grant-funded schools.

Is this measure measurable? Not really. This could be answered with a yes or no, was there an increase in retention. 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 English language learners. However, if the focus is on student retention, there may be an issue.

Is this measure timebound? No, it is not clear when the increase might occur.

Now that you have a better sense of how to make objectives and performance measures SMART, we want to cover a few specifics within the context of the CSP grants.

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 ED. Changing an objective requires a grant amendment, which may not be approved. A common issue we have seen with prior grantees is writing performance measure 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's goals and objectives. For each performance measure, it should be clear from the logic model which activities you proposed 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 School Programs, 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.