



## **Chapter 4**

### **Building a Grassroots Presence**



## How Did ADOPT Identify Outreach Mechanisms?

ADOPT serves Chicago-based communities of Asian Americans. The term “Asian American” includes people of Asian ancestry born in the United States and those born in all parts of Asia, including the Middle East and South Asia. ADOPT’s primary aim was to develop new relationships between Asian communities and DRS to identify outreach mechanisms that can reduce disparities in access to vocational rehabilitation and employment services for Chicago-based Asian immigrants who have disabilities. Because Asian immigrant organizations play a critical role in providing cultural and linguistic services, they can help connect Asian Americans with disabilities (AAWDs) to VR services.



**ADOPT’s Advisory Board**

At the systemic level, ADOPT’s goals are to promote the hiring, retention, and advancement of AAWDs and to dispel negative stereotypes about disability and employment in their communities. These goals are rarely evaluated at the state or city level, possibly because of limited data on disability within Asian subgroups (Hasnain & Leung, 2010). Without evidence about the needs of AAWDs, community-based immigrant organizations that serve Asian subgroups face significant disadvantages when advocating for improved disability policies and resources for new initiatives.

Creating a state VR system that is culturally responsive to the needs of AAWDs requires a set of recommendations that can improve outcomes for this population. ADOPT has created sub-committees to help address changes in the state VR system to improve outcomes for Chicago-based AAWDs. The project started in pan-Asian communities in greater Chicago. ADOPT identified over 35 Asian service agencies and stakeholders that served as project partners to find ways to improve VR access and services for Chicago-based AAWDs and their families.

## Key project activities in Chicago's citywide movement included:

- The formation of a project advisory board with 35 members that consisted of key stakeholders: VR and workforce-related staff in the VR community, AAWDs and their family members, disability advocates, educators, leaders of faith-based and community organizations, and researchers. All of these people played important roles in project development, implementation, and evaluation.
- Advisory board member participation in three new subcommittees whose functions included identifying and addressing priority areas of need and developing action plans to facilitate connection between DRS and Asian communities.
- Establishment of partnerships with several Asian social service agencies (n = 35+) and VR officials (n = 10 DRS/DHS champions) from the Chicago area, who helped the project to identify and connect AAWD job-seekers to DRS.
- Collection of information on the status of AAWDs in the Chicago area, with emphasis on the barriers and challenges they face and identification of the best practices for connecting them to community and agency supports.
- Development of a logic model for the project's goals and objectives (please see Appendix D).
- Identification of priority areas of need and development of action plans to facilitate connections between DRS and Asian communities.



**Meeting with legislators in Springfield, IL.**

## Creation and Description of the Task Forces



**Task Force connections with the City of Chicago help to promote Asian awareness in Cook County.**

During Phase 1, ADOPT's advisory board members decided to form three task forces to identify local needs and strategies that can help address the VR disparity issue. During their bimonthly meetings, the task forces developed specific goals and activities to help bridge the awareness and service gaps between Asian communities and DRS. In May 2010, each group elected chairpersons to lead partnerships with UIC and DRS/DHS.

The initiative also collectively identified and conducted information sessions for various Asian groups (e.g., Asian Human Services, Chinese Mutual Aid Association) to help build their capacities to understand the services DRS offers. In turn, the community agencies introduced the cultural and linguistic issues DRS must consider in providing effective services to the diverse Asian populations they serve.

## **ADOPT's Three Task Forces.**

- **Task Force 1: Building Agencies' Capacity to Address Disability and Vocational Rehabilitation Issues**

Based on meetings with Asian and immigrant agencies in the Chicago area, we have found that few providers of services to Asian immigrants are familiar with DRS or with the disability support services available to their disabled clients and their families. This task force is building awareness of these resources so that agencies can serve as referral portals to DRS. We are discussing ways to build the capacity of each agency and train their staff to appropriately refer clients to DRS.

- **Task Force 2: Building Cultural and Linguistic Capacity at Illinois DRS to Address Asian Issues**

This task force's goal is to identify ways that DRS can become more culturally and linguistically responsive and accessible to AAWDs, their families, and their communities. We are identifying outreach mechanisms to help the state VR system accommodate AAWDs more effectively. The group is specifically examining the intake, referral, and case management processes and will make recommendations to DRS so that the organizations can start to improve access and opportunities for Asians and other minorities with disabilities, including immigrants and refugees.

- **Task Force 3: Promoting Employment Opportunities with and for Asians with Disabilities**

This group worked to identify structural changes in both the private and public sectors, including the nonprofit network. We plan to educate Asian agencies and businesses about disability issues, which will help create opportunities in local communities and match people's abilities to jobs. To diversify their current employer pool, this group is also exploring how DRS can engage more effectively with Asian employers about the benefits of hiring people with disabilities, especially people from their own communities. We are discussing how DRS works with employers as job-placement sites and innovative ways to extend our efforts to Asian immigrant businesses.

## Data Collection and Findings

Little is known about the impact that disability and VR have on AAWDs' experiences as immigrants and potential employees. Few community-based Asian organizations that advise and support AAWDs capture data on this group. Of the 35 Asian agencies it has worked with so far, ADOPT found that only 8% (2 agencies) referred AAWDs to state VR services to help them become integrated into American life. Consequently, ADOPT has been developing outreach strategies to connect AAWDs to the VR system and to foster their integration into the workforce.

Data that ADOPT has collected show that linguistic isolation, lack of bilingual VR counselors, and limited access to DRS are the most significant barriers to comprehensive VR support for AAWDs. We are collecting baseline and outcome data on the number of AAWDs currently being served by DRS to determine what strategies are and are not succeeding. Using a combination of surveys, interviews, and focus groups, ADOPT is producing a portrait of the current situation for AAWDs in Chicago that highlights accessibility challenges and identifies opportunities for improvement.

Before this initiative began, many local AAWDs had limited access to VR and job-training supports and thus had difficulty finding employment in their communities. With the current economic crisis, finding jobs for people with disabilities has become even more challenging, especially given the stigma and discrimination that may exist in Asian communities about physical disabilities and mental illnesses. To change these perceptions, ADOPT is developing public awareness campaigns and TV and radio programs about disability in various languages and will develop fact sheets for service providers about disability and immigration issues.

Although ADOPT is working with DRS and community agencies to bridge the service gap between Chicago-based VR offices and Asian communities, many other immigrant groups have benefited from the initiative, including Africans, Latinos, African Americans, and Middle Easterners. Additionally, ADOPT has had an influence on students, faith-based entities, local immigrant artists, minority businesses, and government officials. As a result, many Asian community leaders are connecting Asians and other immigrants with disabilities to DRS.

## Multicultural Brokering: A Novel and Effective Case Management Tool

The approach that underlies ADOPT's work is multicultural brokering (MB; Jezewski, 1995), a tool to help service providers and systems bridge interactive connections and address disparities. ADOPT used the framework to guide its outreach approach. This model emerged from the field of nursing and disability/rehabilitation fields (Figure 4.1). Through capacity-building partnerships such as those described in this toolkit, service providers can be trained to use the MB model as a guiding framework through which to reach out to marginalized and vulnerable groups, including those with disabilities.

Jezewski and Sotnik (2005) describe multicultural brokering as the “act of bridging, linking, or mediating between groups or persons of differing cultural backgrounds for the purpose of reducing conflict or producing change.” With the MB model, the cultural broker or mediator can act to bridge the cross-cultural service gap between provider and client when problems arise because either client or provider has misinterpreted a cultural meaning.

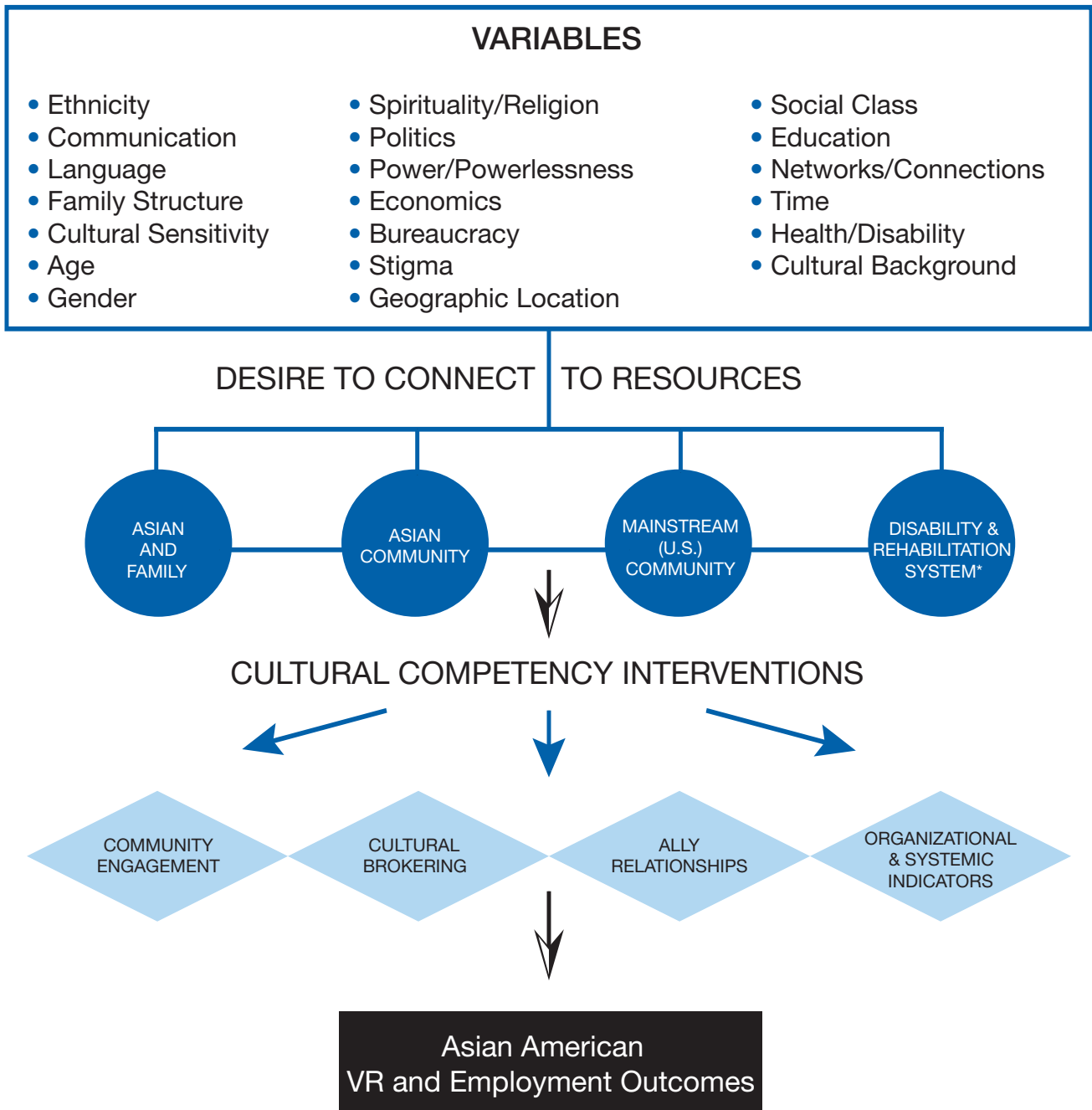
VR professionals and Asian providers have begun using MB to look at the cultural issues they face in their work with AAWDs and their families, with the goal of developing and implementing strategies and practices to improve these clients' quality of life. MB emerged from studies of underserved and marginalized populations as a dynamic and multifaceted approach to advocacy that focuses on addressing both enabling and oppositional factors.



**ADOPT board member interacting with a faculty member at UIC's Asian American Studies Program.**

Figure 4.1

# Multicultural Brokering Framework



\* Local, State, National, International

Figure 4.1. The multicultural brokering framework: A method for improving service access for Asian Americans with disabilities.



Figure 4.1 shows that the MB framework begins with consideration of the many variables that may affect Asian's service access and ultimately, their outcomes. Four key parties share the desire to connect to resources: the Asian individual with a disability and his or her family, the Asian community, the mainstream U.S. community, and the VR system.

These four stakeholder groups work interactively to implement cultural competency interventions including community engagement, cultural brokering, ally relationships, and organizational and systems-level supports, all of which can lead to better outcomes for AAWDs.

The MB model includes the individual, family, and disability/health provider as well as the community, policy maker/researcher, and the broader refugee and service systems. Although the concept may be unfamiliar to some providers in disability and VR, many are already using some of its components and principles. A key point of the model is that, through community-based partnerships, providers and researchers can identify customized and culturally responsive strategies and pathways to increase disability access and use of services and supports. The MB model uses a problem-based learning approach that can help to address the VR and employment disparity issue. The ADOPT initiative has implemented many aspects of this framework to create an outreach mechanism within the state VR service delivery system.

## ADOPT's Programmatic Structure

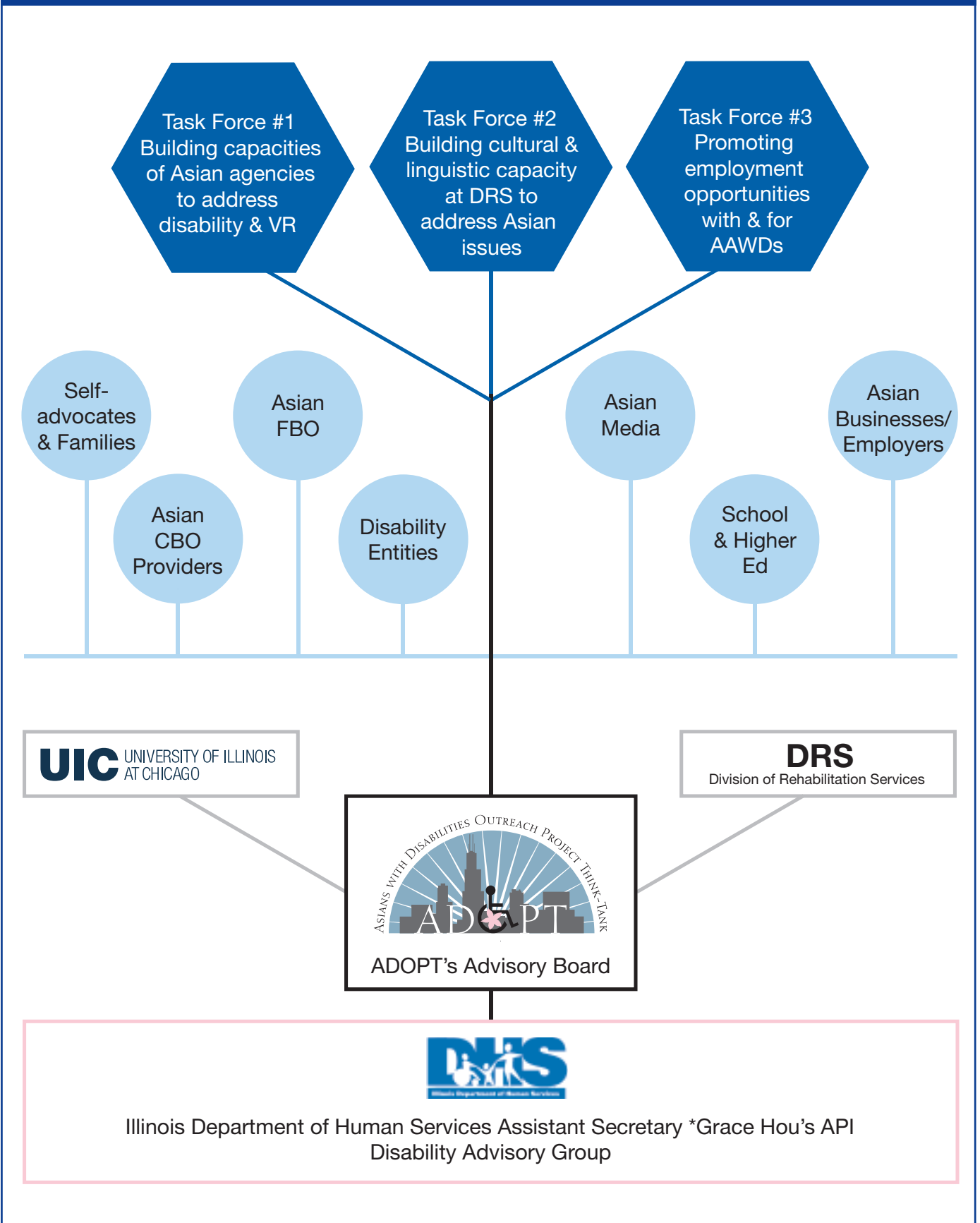
The key to ADOPT's success has been the establishment of new partnerships to improve the inclusion of people with disabilities, as shown in Figure 4.2. These partnerships involve a community of change agents who can serve as local experts by identifying the resource needs of AAWDs, along with vital and previously undersupplied information about disability. Details about concrete needs and solutions are highlighted in this toolkit to call attention to the challenges as well as the assets that exist in Chicago-based Asian and immigrant communities. In a short amount of time, ADOPT has developed partnerships with immigrant and refugee groups, city officials, and coalitions that play important roles in guiding ADOPT's operations and outcomes.

Although disability and social integration are clearly connected, little research has been conducted in the context of VR to examine the roles providers, systems, and communities can play in helping AAWDs. In response to this situation, ADOPT used information collected from numerous stakeholders to develop this toolkit for the state VR system and its partners. The toolkit is intended to improve VR and employment opportunities for AAWDs and other immigrant groups and will be used as the central tool to improve outreach practices and policies within DRS.



**Inclusion of people with disabilities in all areas of community outreach as well as in businesses, events, and grassroots movements, is critical for change.**

**Figure 4.2. ADOPT's programmatic structure**



**Figure 4.2. ADOPT's programmatic structure.**

**\*Grace Hou served as the Assistant Secretary at the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) from 2003 to 2012 and now is President of the Woods Fund of Chicago.**

## Chapter 4 References

Hasnain, R., & Leung, P. (2010). Cross-cultural issues in the vocational rehabilitation system for Asian-Pacific Americans with disabilities. In F. E. Balcazar, Y. Suarez-Balcazar, C. Keys, & T. Taylor-Ritzler (Eds.), *Race, culture, and disability: Rehabilitation science and practice* (pp. 185-204). Sudbury, MA: Jones and Bartlett Publishers.

Jezewski, M. A. (1995). Evolution of a grounded theory: Conflict resolution through cultural brokering. *Advances in Nursing Science*, 17(3), 14-30.

Jezewski, M. A., & Sotnik, P. (2005). Disability service providers as culture broker. In J. Stone (Ed.), *Culture and disability: Providing culturally competent services* (pp. 37-64). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

## Appendix D.

### ADOPT's Initial Approach, The Logic Model

ADOPT learned that forming an advisory committee for outreach was challenging, but without such an effort, the project would not have progressed. The advisory board and its three task forces, composed of DRS/DHS staff, Asian Americans with disabilities, families, city officials, disability advocates, researchers, and faith leaders, have provided feedback to ADOPT about outreach that should be done and the best ways to do it. Throughout the 18 months of the initiative, the committee and its task forces met often to strategize and distribute information on VR and employment options for those with no connections to such resources.

ADOPT sought out participants who would be invested in its work and would provide valuable perspectives or community connections. ADOPT initiated contact with potential members and partners and met with them to explain the initiative. This toolkit contains a synthesis of these committees' efforts as well as several field/research activities.

As a first step, ADOPT created a logic model. It was developed by a small group of stakeholders who came together in December 2009 to guide the growth of a citywide outreach approach. The W. K. Kellogg Foundation defines the logic model approach as follows:

A program logic model is a systematic, visual way to present a planned program with its underlying assumptions and theoretical framework. It is a picture of why and how you believe a program will work. Logic model methodology causes you to describe, share, discuss, and improve theory—in words and pictures—as you develop (plan, implement, and evaluate) a program. ([www.wkkf.org](http://www.wkkf.org))

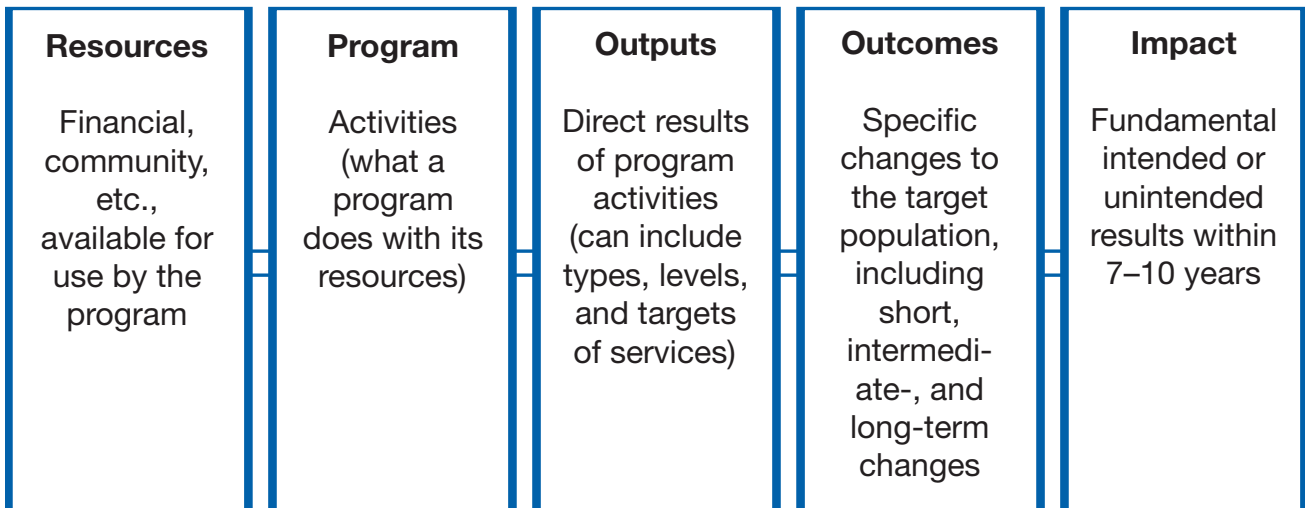
Logic models are beneficial at all program stages, including development, implementation, and evaluation. Here are some specific benefits, courtesy of the Kellogg Foundation (2000).

Logic models:

- strengthen the case for program investment;
- develop a simple image that reflects how and why a program will work;
- reflect a group process;
- can change over time.

Logic models facilitate the planning, implementation, and evaluation of outreach efforts. They allow users to visualize the activities and resources needed to accomplish outreach goals, and they show how all the outreach components are related to each other.

## Basic Components of a Program Logic Model



## Using the Logic Model Throughout the Life of Your Program

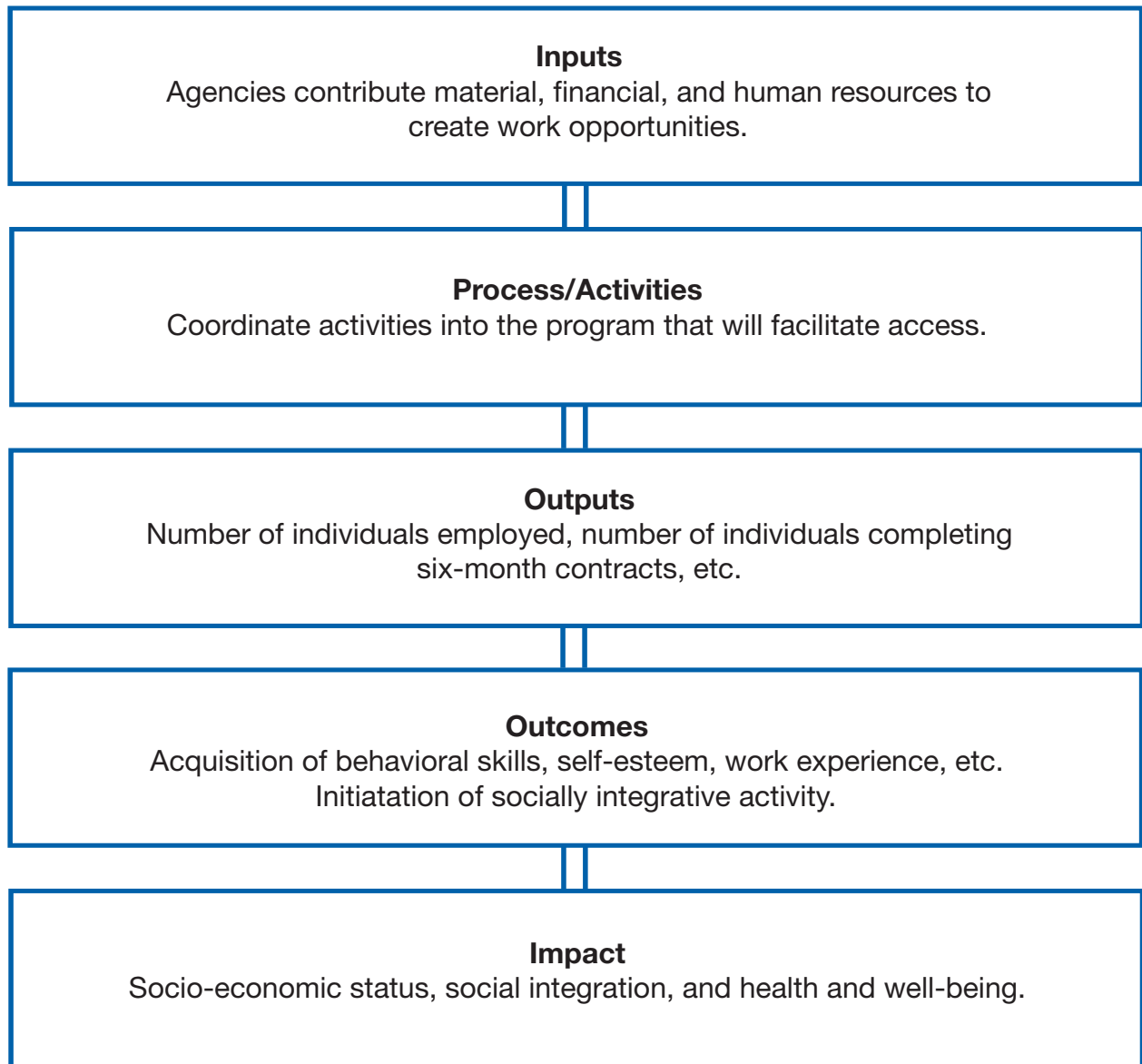
The five steps to program planning includes:

1. Drafting a problem or issue statement
2. Exploring community needs/assets
3. Deciding on desired results
4. Identifying influential factors (change factors)
5. Using strategies/best practices to examine assumptions (how and why strategies will work)

Step 2 is creating the logic model, which will show the program's progress.

Step 3 is program evaluation, using questions and indicators

# Thinking Outside the Box: An Intersectoral Model for Vocational Rehabilitation





## Appendix D. References

W. K. Kellogg Foundation (2000). Executive summary: Introducing program logic models.  
<https://apps.publichealth.arizona.edu/CHWToolkit/PDFs/Logicmod/logicmod.pdf>.

For the executive summary, please visit

<https://apps.publichealth.arizona.edu/CHWtoolkit/PDFs/Logicmod/executiv.pdf>.

To view the full article, including logic models, see

<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1741-1130.2008.00197.x/pdf>.

(Requires institutional access to view full article)