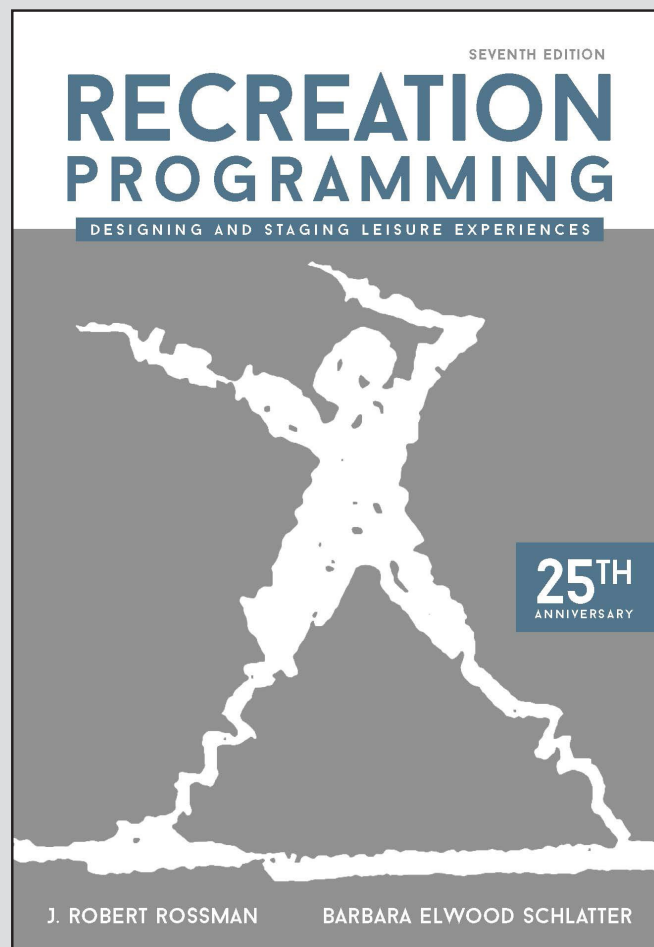# THE PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT CYCLE

This is optional reading that will give you an overview or recap of the Program Development Cycle. The Cycle is covered thoroughly in the book on a step by step basis. This reading gives an overview of the Cycle. Your instructor may or may not assign this reading to you.

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SEVENTH EDITION

RECREATION
PROGRAMMING
DESIGNING AND STAGING LEISURE EXPERIENCES

25TH ANNIVERSARY

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OVERVIEW

OVERVIEW OF THE PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT CYCLE

Over two-thirds of the text is dedicated to explaining how to implement the steps in the copyrighted Program Development Cycle. Some instructors will introduce the steps to the overall cycle and then proceed through the book as they choose introducing a variety of techniques for implementing each step. Others will assign you to read this overview as a means for introducing the cycle. As you read this chapter, remember there is much more detail in the text about how to actually implement each step.

In 1985, Carpenter and Howe introduced the notion that there is a cycle to developing successful programs. This notion of a cycle has been developed by other authors, including Farrell and Lundegren (1991), Rossman (1989), and others. During the development of a cycle for programming, the number of steps increased. We believe the Program Development Cycle included in your text cumulates the work in this area and represents a comprehensive and complete cycle. A diagram of the steps included in program development and the order they occur are included in the 7th edition of the book on pp. 106 and 107—the Program Development Cycle. The cycle includes four major stages and nine specific steps.
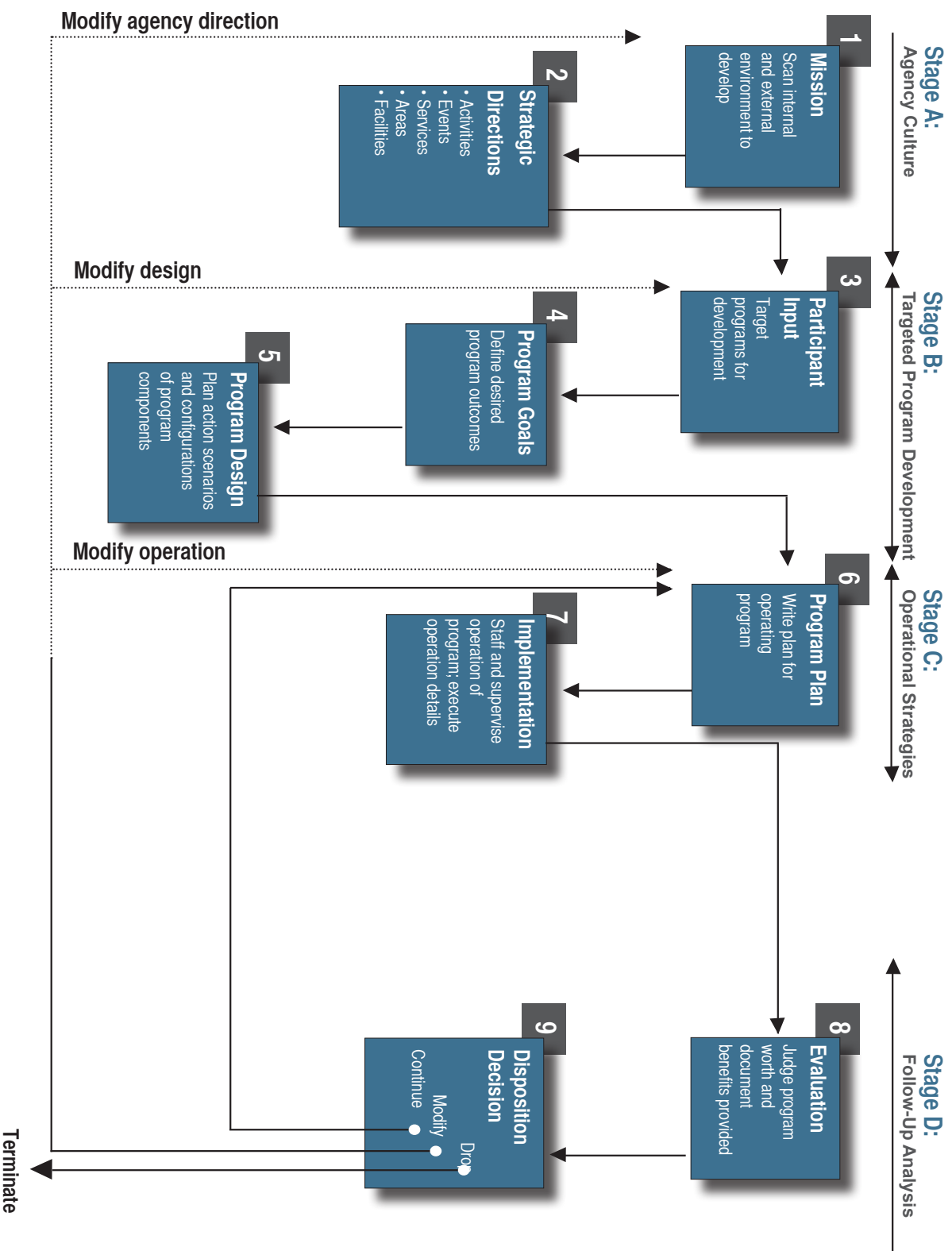
Before explaining the cycle, we want to comment on the actual nature of program design and development. Although the diagrammatic representation of the cycle gives the illusion that planning a program is a linear, sequential process, in actual practice it is an iterative, interactive process requiring continued recycling of these steps until an operational program plan is completed.

Programs are developed through trial-and-error methods of implementation that continue until a suitable program design is completed. It is unusual for a perfect program to be planned and implemented during the first operations of a program. The notion that perfect planning must occur before implementing a program is a myth that is perpetuated in the literature. Peters and Waterman (1982) clearly point out that one of the distinguishing characteristics of successful organizations is that they act on their environment. Successful organizations do not allow new ideas to be "planned" into oblivion. They act on an idea as soon as possible, evaluate their actions, rework the idea, and implement it again. Operating in this manner, organizations have a number of experiments under way at all times. Successful ideas are nurtured and developed further. Unsuccessful ideas are dropped. Successful programs are usually the result of ongoing, incremental improvement and expansion over a period of time. The successful programs you develop are likely to follow this same pattern of development.

In programming, this same process needs to be followed. The Program Development Cycle is a model for action that guides professional practice. It provides a path to follow, and it contains a number of recycling loops that illustrate the need to retrace certain steps in the ongoing development of a program. Because of the way this illustration is drawn, it appears that following the recycling loops is done only because of a failure to implement the system properly in the first place. This is not always the case! It is very likely that a successful program will have been through several iterations of the cycle during its planning. And the programmer will have to rework a program after each operation of the program. This is the normal course of program development—not an indication of failure.

The Program Development Cycle

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Stage A:
Agency Culture

Stage B:
Targeted Program Development

Stage C:
Operational Strategies

Stage D:
Follow-Up Analysis

Modify agency direction

1
Mission
Scan internal and external environment to develop

2
Strategic Directions
• Activities
• Events
• Services
• Areas
• Facilities

Modify design

3
Participant Input
Target programs for development

4
Program Goals
Define desired program outcomes

5
Program Design
Plan action scenarios and configurations of program components

Modify operation

6
Program Plan
Write plan for operating program

7
Implementation
Staff and supervise operation of program; execute operation details

8
Evaluation
Judge program worth and document benefits provided

9
Disposition Decision
Continue
Modify
Drop

Terminate

THE FOUR MAJOR STAGES

There are four major stages in the program development cycle. In each stage, there is a major goal to be accomplished that makes a unique contribution to the final program.

Stage A: Agency Culture

In Stage A, Agency Culture, the programmer develops an understanding of the agency's mission and helps develop the strategic programming directions of the agency. These strategies provide a general direction for program development and specify the areas of programming that an agency will develop. Most often the document that outlines this direction is the agency's mission statement or vision statement, accompanied by a three- to five-year strategic plan for implementing the agency's mission. A programmer often cannot have short-term influence over the direction outlined by the mission statement because it is a policy-level decision that the programmer is not in a position to influence or because the time frame covered by the document is longer than the more short-range task of program design and development.

In the short-range (three to five years), this stage is relatively unchanged because of the stability of an agency's mission and strategic direction. It is usually unnecessary to complete the work outlined in this stage for each program developed. However, programmers must ensure to demonstrate that the programs they are developing are included within the activities defined by the mission and that their programs contribute to implementing the agency's strategic plan.

Stage B: Targeted Program Development

In Stage B, Targeted Program Development, the programmer begins focusing on the unique programming needs of specifically targeted participant groups. In this stage, the programmer reconciles program demand determined from participant input with the resource limits of the agency, its mission, and strategic directions. The programmer then designs and develops programs for specific groups of participants the agency has indicated it wishes to serve.

It is in this stage that programs are designed for specific groups of people who can be identified and described with some precision. Programs are designed to create programmed leisure experiences that will meet participant needs within the framework of the agency's mission, strategic directions, and resource limits. To accomplish this requires an understanding of the experience one is trying to create and an understanding of how to design and stage leisure experiences.

Stage C: Operational Strategies

In Stage C, Operational Strategies, a written program plan that is a "script for operation" is developed, and the program is staged. Patron experience includes engaging and interacting with the environment created thereby helping co-create the experience.

During the operation of a program, the programmer oversees the implementation of all details, including program promotion, registering participants, staffing, and staging the program including supervising operations and perhaps engaging in face-to-face interactions with participants. Patrons who participate in a properly staged program will have the experience envisioned and intended by the programmer during the design phase of program development.

Stage D: Follow-up Analysis

In Stage D, Follow-up Analysis, the program is evaluated and a disposition decision made on the basis of evalu-

ation data that has been collected. The worth of a program should be determined from multiple perspectives. With these evaluation data, a decision is made about which of three management options to take—to continue, drop, or modify a program. Evaluation data need to be sufficiently detailed and comprehensive so that appropriate program modifications can be made if warranted. In this book, emphasis is placed on using evaluation data that have been systematically collected from multiple sources so disposition decisions can be made from a broad-based analysis of the evidence. An overview of what is to be accomplished in each step is provided in the next section.

STAGE A: AGENCY CULTURE

Step 1: Mission

In Step 1, the programmer either learns the agency's mission or helps develop it. Every recreation organization delivers a different type of service. Differences in these services are partly accounted for by different missions and philosophies of various organizations. For example, the Girl Scouts deliver different services than the YMCA. The YMCA delivers different services than municipal recreation agencies. Municipal recreation agencies deliver different services than church recreation agencies. Church recreation agencies deliver different services than commercial recreation agencies. And so on.

An agency's programming philosophy is formally articulated in a mission statement and is the result of several years of development. According to Pfeffer and Salancik (1978), a mission statement most often reflects an agency's formal declaration of its intended clientele in order to seek the resources it needs to function and ensure its survival. An agency's mission is developed through an analysis of both the internal and external environments of the agency.

Accomplishing this requires completing an organizational and community needs assessment. The mission of the agency is developed from the joint implications of the needs of the community in which it is located; the identified needs of patrons, and the needs, resources, and abilities of the organization itself.

Developing an agency's mission is an activity that is usually performed by the executive staff of an agency in collaboration with a policy making board. Although programmers may have input into this activity, they are not usually responsible for developing or writing a mission statement. However, they are responsible for knowing the agency's mission so they can develop programs to fulfill it.

Step 2: Strategic Directions

In Step 2, strategic directions for developing program services are planned. The long-range philosophy and mission of the agency is further defined with the development of mid-range (three to five years) strategic directions. These statements delineate what the agency intends to accomplish to fulfill its mission. Usually these are developed with three- to five-year statements that are defined further with one-year management by objective statements (MBO) usually tied to budget development. An example of a strategic direction would be the declaration of an agency to develop services that create environmental awareness; or to implement additional athletic and fitness services for girls and women. Strategic directions outline new or additional programming options the agency will pursue.

It is important to recognize that a programmer will often be responsible for implementing strategic directions developed by higher level administrators or by a board by developing one-year MBO statements specifying programs to be developed in a given budget year that will implement the strategic direction.

STAGE B: TARGETED PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

Step 3: Obtain Participant Input

In this step, the programmer tries to identify program services, benefit packages, and program features that cohorts of targeted participants may want. The goal in this step is to obtain participant input so that program services can be developed that meet identified participant desires. Several techniques for accomplishing this are discussed, including needs assessment. According to Carpenter and Howe (1985), needs assessment is defined as "a process of identifying and discovering constituents' leisure needs, attitudes, values, and behaviors, as well as areas in which clarification, improvement, or reinforcement of leisure functioning is desired" (p. 78).

Needs assessment is a misunderstood step of the program development cycle. The objective in this step is to systematically assess the needs and desires of the organization's participant groups so one can prioritize the allocation of limited resources among competing interests. Too often, programmers simply look at needs assessment as a process that is supposed to identify for them a completed program they can implement. This is hardly ever the case.

Needs assessment provides partial information about participants, their needs, services that might be implemented, available resources, and other types of specific information—not complete programs. The information developed through needs assessment must be analyzed and interpreted by a well-trained programmer before recommendations for program services can be made from the data collected. Collecting participant information with marketing techniques is also covered in this step. These data usually focus on participant desires for specific program services as well as specific features about program delivery that participants want. The ultimate goal of collecting marketing data is to match an identifiable cohort of participants with a service that has the features they desire.

Interpreting data and developing program recommendations from them are unique abilities of the leisure service profession. Accomplishing this task requires an understanding of leisure behavior and the factors that contribute to and constrain the occurrence of the leisure experience. Too much of the literature about assessing data assumes that the problem is that programmers are not collecting the data properly. The recommended solution is better training in the techniques of collecting social science data. What is needed, however, is better training of programmers in understanding leisure behavior and how leisure experiences are construed by the individuals in them. This understanding will provide a better framework for interpreting the data collected. Once programmers understand how to move from data to program design, improving data collection will improve the whole process. But until there is a better understanding of how to use data in the programming process, focusing on acquiring better data is of marginal value. In this step, then, the programmer attempts to systematically collect information about participants that will be useful in developing and revising program services so that agency resources can be allocated to serving identified participant wants.

Step 4: Specify Program Goals

Once data are collected and analyzed, it should be possible to begin identifying some specific program outcomes inferred from the data. These outcome statements may be partial descriptors of the program to be developed. For example, from the data collected one may be able to determine that there is a need for a program in a specific geographical area of a community, for specific age groups, during a certain time period, with specific outcomes from participation. On a military base, for instance, one may discover a need for a program off base, for servicemen under 21, on weekend evenings, that will offer the opportunity for socialization with members of the opposite sex.

The goals developed to ensure accomplishment of these outcomes could be very definitive as in the case of outcome based programming (OBP) wherein the programmer identifies specific behavioral outcomes to be achieved by a program that are transformational for participants. The definitive outcomes could come from agency policy, outcomes desired by program sponsors, or the articulated desires of the participants. A key point here is that in this

step one begins to integrate participant data with the two previous steps, which have already provided some strategic direction regarding what programs the agency will develop. Data from participants represents the first instance in the cycle where the needs of individuals enter the program development cycle. In Step 4, the implications of these two are integrated. A data-based description of a needed service consistent with the agency's mission is developed with specific outcomes to be achieved and the goals and objectives needed to realize these outcomes.

Step 5: Program Design

The purpose of program design is to conceptualize and plan the action scenarios and configurations of program components needed to stage a program and fulfill the program outcomes previously developed. Program design is the major transitional step between needs assessment and staging experiences. During this step, programmers develop leisure experiences for patrons by vicariously experiencing the program before it occurs through projective imagery and other design techniques. Creativity techniques are used during this step to try and push the programmer to move beyond their normal approach to a more novel approach. During the design process, programs are designed to be within the limits defined by the agency's mission, that meet identified participant needs determined during Step 3, that are feasible within the agency's resources limits, and are operationally feasible in the community where the agency is located. In the program design phase, participant data are interpreted and analyzed in a manner that results in the design of an actual program.

STAGE C: OPERATIONAL STRATEGIES

Step 6: Program Plan

In Step 6, the programmer prepares a written plan that details all of the arrangements and scenarios needed to stage the experience conceptualized and designed in Step 5. The program plan is similar to a script for a play or a blueprint for a building. The script communicates to each actor and the director his or her role in performing the play written by the playwright. A blueprint coordinates the activities of many different trades-people so their collective efforts result in the building intended by the architect. Similarly, a program plan communicates the program concept and arrangements that are necessary to all who will be involved in staging the program specifying what each individual must accomplish so participants have the experience intended by the designer. The written program plan is also used to guide future operations of the program.

Step 7: Implementation

In Step 7, the program is actually staged. There is much to be accomplished in this step, including obtaining and arranging the venue for the program, promoting the program, registering participants, staffing the program, supervising the operation of the program, and other matters. This step occupies the majority of a programmer's time. A myriad of details must be attended to in operating several programs simultaneously. In reality, a programmer usually has a number of programs in various stages of operation going on at the same time. Pressured by implementation details, many programmers focus too heavily on the importance of implementation and often cite inadequate implementation as the primary cause of a failed program.

Because of the pressure of real time operation, many programmers are overwhelmed by the need to attend to all of the implementation details of program operation. As a result, they overlook or circumvent other steps in the Program Development Cycle. This often leads to unsuccessful programs. All that is involved in this step is detailed

several chapters in the book. For now it is sufficient to indicate that at this point patrons actually attend the program, interact in the social occasion designed by the programmer in a manner that facilitates co-creation for them, and have the leisure experience intended.

STAGE D: FOLLOW-UP ANALYSIS

Step 8: Evaluation

In Step 8, a program evaluation is conducted. Evaluation is a procedure designed to help make decisions about the worth of program services based on participants' satisfaction, accomplishing intended program outcomes, and implementing the agency's mission. It is an elastic concept that covers many different activities. There are several ways of conducting evaluations and an agency will have different evaluation activities occurring simultaneously. The emphasis in this text will be on developing evaluations that provide value judgments from multiple value perspectives with systematically obtained data. Conducting systematic program evaluation assures ongoing managerial review and action on all program services.

Step 9: Disposition Decision

In Step 9, the evaluation data developed in Step 8 are used to make one of three possible decisions about the future of a program: to continue the program without modification, to continue it with modifications, or to terminate the program. Each of these decisions leads the programmer to different recycling locations in the Program Development Cycle. When programmers terminate a program, as the arrow in the Program Development Cycle illustrates, they leave the Program Development Cycle. However, it is always necessary to predict the implications of program termination before actually ending a service.

The decision to modify a program includes more choices than the other two decisions since there are many modifications that could be implemented. The solid line for the decision to modify leads to the implementation step. This is often the problem area and one that should be investigated first. However, it is also likely that a program has failed because of small omissions and failures at any step in the cycle. For example, misinterpretation of participant input and inappropriate design are possible causes of program failure. It is even possible that one has developed a program that does not fit in with the agency's mission or strategic plan outlined in Steps 1 and 2. Thus, it is wise to retrace decisions made at each step. As discussed in the beginning of this article, a program will often be modified several times throughout its implementation history before a totally suitable operational procedure is perfected.

When deciding to continue a program as currently operated, the programmer recycles to Step 6—the program plan. In this instance, a written plan is ready for implementation at the next operation of the program. If directed so by your instructor, complete the exercise below in class. If not, contemplate its challenges yourself.

EXERCISE: PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT ASSUMPTIONS

In class, discuss the difference between assuming that programs are planned perfectly before implementation and assuming that they are developed incrementally over time through many iterations of operation.

- What differences are implied by each of these assumptions for programmers?
- How must programmers operate under each of these assumptions?

Conclusion

The Program Development Cycle illustrates all of the steps necessary for designing and staging a program. Although there seems to be a large number of steps in the cycle, one does not actually complete all of them during the development of each program. For example, the steps included in Stage A, Agency Culture, are not completed for each program developed. The implications of these two steps are incorporated in each program, but the tasks needed to implement these steps are completed infrequently. Similarly, an in-depth, systematic collection of participant input data may occur only annually or every two to three years. However, the implications of these data are incorporated into all programs developed after the data have been collected.

Program implementation is the most time-consuming step of all and time spent in actual operation seems like a good use of the programmer's time. But it is easy to focus too much on implementation details without giving sufficient attention to the other steps of the program development cycle. Program implementation is important, but it is equally important to develop program outcomes from participants' input, to design programs before writing a program plan, to prepare a well written program plan, to properly implement a program, to systematically collect evaluation data, and to make data-based disposition decisions regarding the status of the program. Good programming practice requires that all of the steps be implemented to achieve sustainable, well focused programs that meet participant, organizational, and community needs.

Examine the diagram on p. 108 of the text (7th edition) for some idea of how much time programmers spend on each of the steps in the Program Development Cycle.

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