MAKING LOGIC MODELS MORE SYSTEMIC: AN ACTIVITY

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change within their social systems. This paper was prepared for the 1999 American Evaluation Association annual meeting, Orlando, FL.

Introduction

A system is an assemblage of related components forming a complex or unitary whole. To make a logic model systemic means adjusting the logic model to attend to the social system(s) in which the initiative depicted in the model is intended to fit. Initiatives may make logical sense when viewed in isolation but take on a different character when viewed within the context of a given system.

This handout focuses on moving from a basic logic model of an initiative to one that takes into account the dynamics of the social systems that the initiative is designed to influence. The handout has a basic model that was built using the perspective presented in the paper, **Everything You Wanted to Know About Logic Models But Were Afraid to Ask**.

The logic model bears considerable resemblance to an initiative developed by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation but has been modified to support the purpose of this activity.

For purposes of this activity, assume the initiative is designed by a private foundation. A number of grantees will be involved in using the model to make changes in their local situation. The grantees are expected to make changes within their own sites within the general framework of the initiative. The initiative has some processes the grantees are expected to follow and some outcomes they are expected to achieve. Yet, the foundation wants grantees to modify the model to be appropriate to their situation.

An Example Logic Model

The following IF-THEN statements describe a Native American Higher Education Initiative (NAHEI).

IF-THEN Statements for NAHEI Basic Logic Model

Before giving the IF-THEN statements, a definition of the problem that prompted the initiative is given.

Problem Definition

Certain conditions in society have generated conditions that lead to low Native American graduation rates from higher education. Those conditions include the fact that Native American education is government controlled, fragmented, inadequately funded, has low expectations for Native American students and neglects their needs. On a broader social level, historically Native Americans have experienced attempts at assimilation into non-Native cultures, neglect, disrespect, racism, poverty, and ridicule.

These conditions have led to limited Native American access to higher education, culturally irrelevant higher education programs, unsupportive academic environments, low connections of education to the Native American community, a lack of Native American leadership in higher education, weak organizational capacity in Native controlled higher education institutes (including poor funding, management structures, and polices), conflicting educational visions and lack of collaboration among Native-controlled institutions, mainstream institutions serving Native Americans, communities, tribal government, and other institutions.

IF-THEN Logic Model Statements

The NAHEI is designed to have three phases. Through these three phases the problems described above will be addressed leading to the desired impacts. The first impact is that Native American graduation rates from Native-controlled higher education institutions (largely tribal colleges) will increase. For some graduates, this will build a pipeline into mainstream institutions resulting in more Native Americans obtaining four-year degrees. Consequently, Native Americans will gain their fair share of higher education, employment, leadership opportunities, and gain support for their communities and respect for their culture.

Each of the phases is built around a set of cause-and-effect assumptions.

In Phase I, the theory is that IF visioning, planning, dialogue, and interest among funders occurs along with the development of initiatives VIA activities of the foundation, participating institutions of higher education (IHEs), and national Native American organizations, THEN the following will result: shared vision, collaboration, funding, stronger infrastructures, and national organization and the foundation's capacities.

In Phase II, the theory is that IF the shared vision, collaboration, funding, stronger infrastructures, and national organization and the foundation's capacities are transformed VIA the development of Native-controlled institutions, capacity building within Native American national organizations, and specific academic, culturally relevant collaborative projects (sometimes involving mainstream institutions), THEN students will have greater access and success, academic program will be stronger and more culturally relevant, learning environments will be more supportive and/or students will be more connected to their community, traditions, and/or larger society. Additionally, the national Native American organizations will be able to support Native-controlled and mainstream institutions in fundraising, faculty development, management and/or economic planning.

Phase III has many similarities to Phase II except that now the impetus for action is largely shifted from the foundation to the participating IHEs and national organizations via improved infrastructures such as use of technology, reward policies, allocation of resources and course offerings. Phase III is still focused on specific settings and issues.

Over time (beyond the five years of foundation funding) the institutions and national organizations will continue the processes learned through the initiative to keep determining how to balance the forces that support and undermine their goals.

Logic Model Diagrams

Appendix A contains the logic model diagrams. The first diagram depicts the problem definition that led to the initiative. The second diagram depicts the framework for the three phases of the initiative. Each phase is depicted as a set of IF-THEN statements—IF X happens via Y actions, THEN Z will result. The THEN statements of the Phase I become the IF statements for the second phase. Similarly, the THEN statements of Phase II become the IF statements of Phase III. The THEN statements of phase III lead to the desired impacts for the primary beneficiaries of the initiative—Native American students and their communities.

The next three pages show each of the three phases of the initiative respectively in more detail. (If they were lined up side by side with the THEN statements of the prior phase overlapping the IF statements of the subsequent phase, they would match the general framework given earlier but with more detail.)

Making the Model More Systemic: An Activity

Scenarios

Each group will assume they are a team from one local site. They will use one of the situations below:

Situation 1: Over the past seven years, a group of mainstream university and the tribal college leaders have been actively involved in building a pipeline between the tribal college and university. The tribal college has been in existence for 15 years. It has 300 students. The mainstream university has 10,000 students.

Situation 2: Over the past 10 years a few informal contacts have existed between leaders of the mainstream university and tribal college. Generally, however, there has been a history of distrust between the institutions. Now new presidents have come to both the university and the college. They are interested in building relationships between the two institutions.

Situation 3: The community is very supportive of the tribal college. They view the college as the means by which the community can build a stronger economic base. They are especially interested in ensuring that the young people who go to the tribal college stay in the community. The mainstream university has strong education and health sciences departments.

Situation 4: The tribal college is viewed by the community as distant and not necessarily supportive of the values of the community. The college is struggling to stay afloat financially. Outside Native-oriented organizations have been offering to help the college develop a stronger infrastructure.

Using the scenario as the starting point, make whatever additional assumptions about the situation that you would like as you respond to the questions below.

Questions

1. What factors would you build into the model to tailor it to the specific systems in this site? (See section below for ideas of factors to include.)
2. How would you modify or shift the emphases in Phase I to better fit the situation?
3. (If time) How would you visually depict the model? You are free to modify the existing model as much as desired. Consider visually depicting the initiative using an analogy. For example you might use a river with rapids, smooth areas, rushing water, strong currents, and rocks to depict the dynamics of the situation.

Considerations

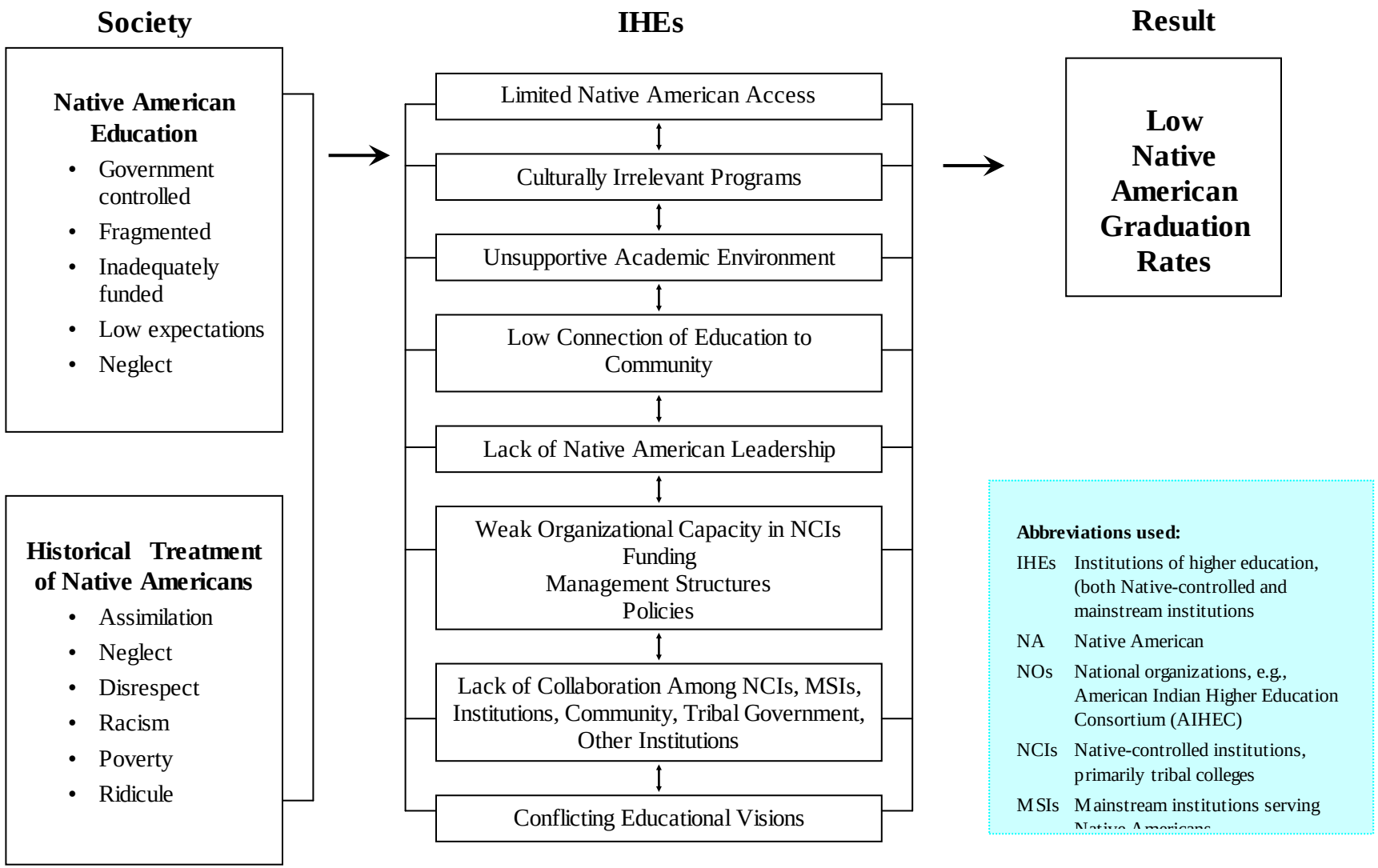
Here are some ideas you might consider as you make the model more systemic.

1. Consider the full range of systems that affect the initiatives (e.g., even though an initiative may be designed to bring change in the higher education system, the nature of the K-12 education system may affect how the initiative is implemented).
2. Identify factors that amplify (support) the direction the initiative is taking.
3. Identify the factors that counter the direction the initiative is taking.

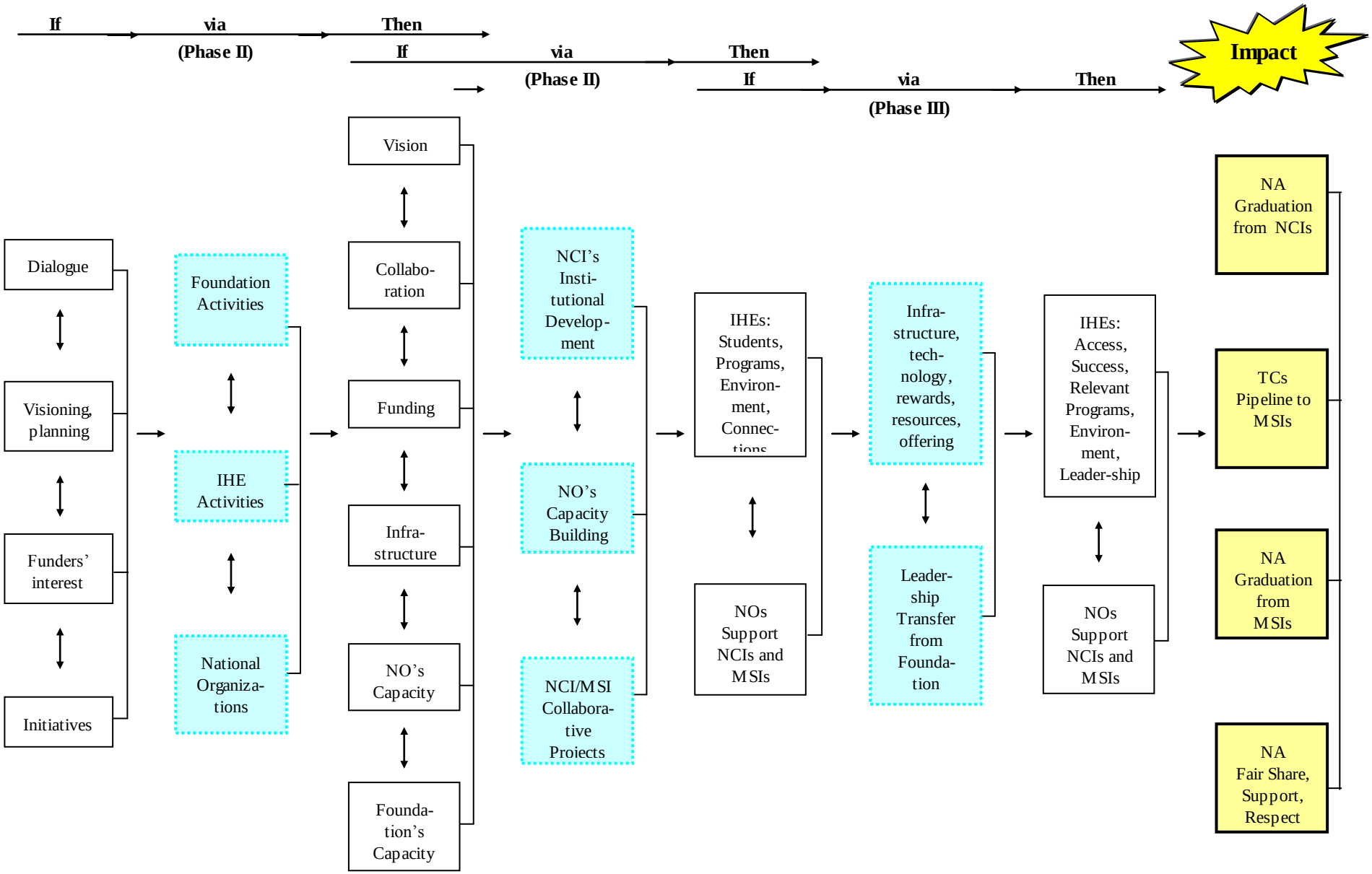
4. In selecting factors that amplify or counter the direction of the initiative, consider the following:

   - national, state, and local governmental **policies**
   - institutional and organizational **policies**
   - differential impact of people **outside** the system versus those who are **inside** the system
   - factors impinging on the initiative that are **within** and those that are **beyond** the **control** of the involved systems
   - how **historical patterns of change** may predict what factors may support or inhibit this change initiative
   - **communications** patterns among the stakeholders
   - **connection**s of this initiative to other efforts underway to support the desired results
   - the nature and extent of **power** that supporters and non-supporters of the initiative have
   - the degree of **commitment** that key people have to the initiative
   - the balance of **resources** that are going into the initiative from outside the systems versus resources within the system that are being reallocated for the initiative
   - **planning processes** within the systems that can be used to build the initiative into the regular life of the system
   - **partnerships** that are or can support or inhibit the initiative
   - the **existing vision, philosophy, and/or mission** of the involved organizations to determine their congruence with the initiative

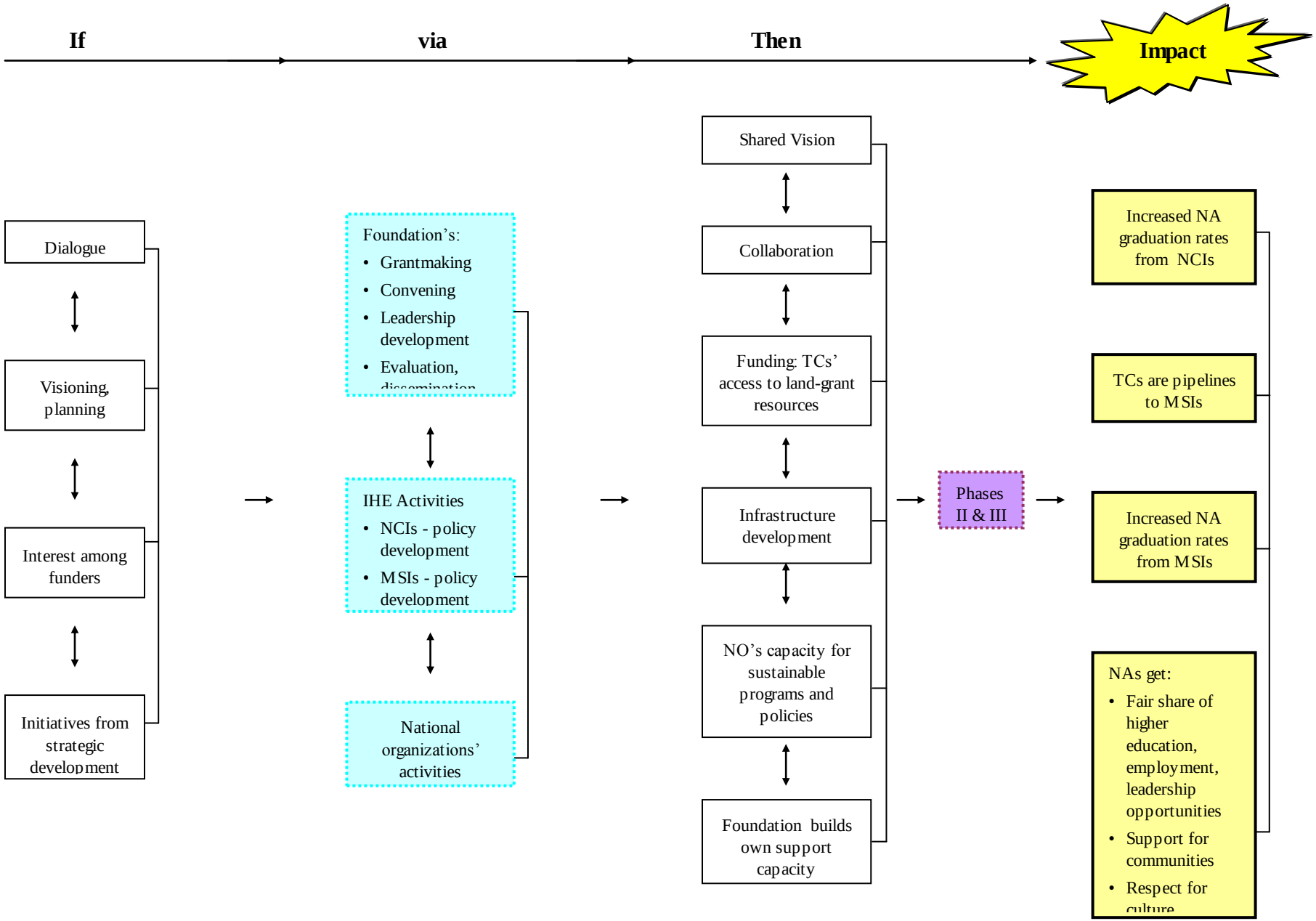
Appendix A – NAHEI Problem Definition



NAHEI Logic Model General Framework



NAHEI Logic Model – Phase I



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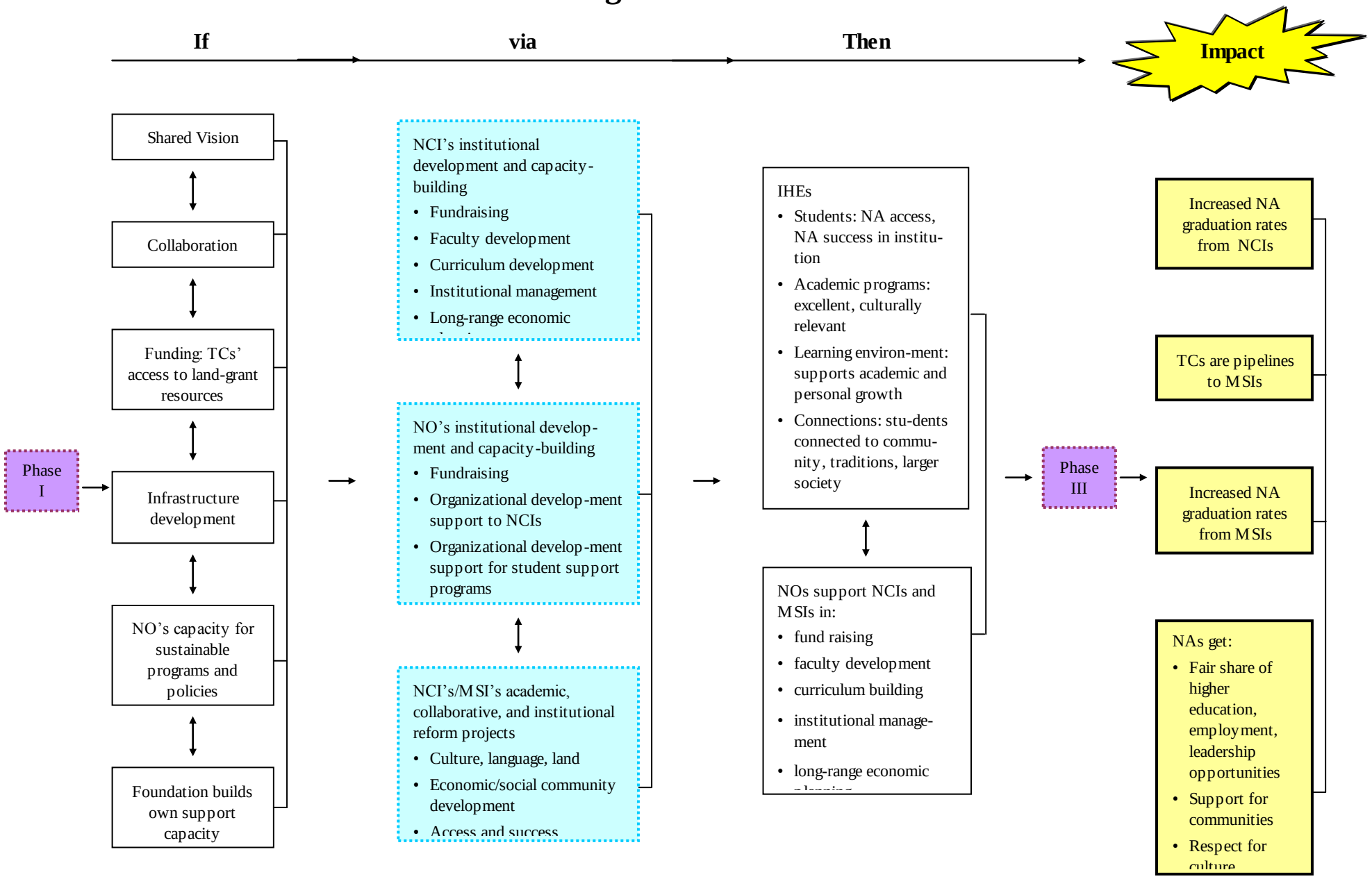
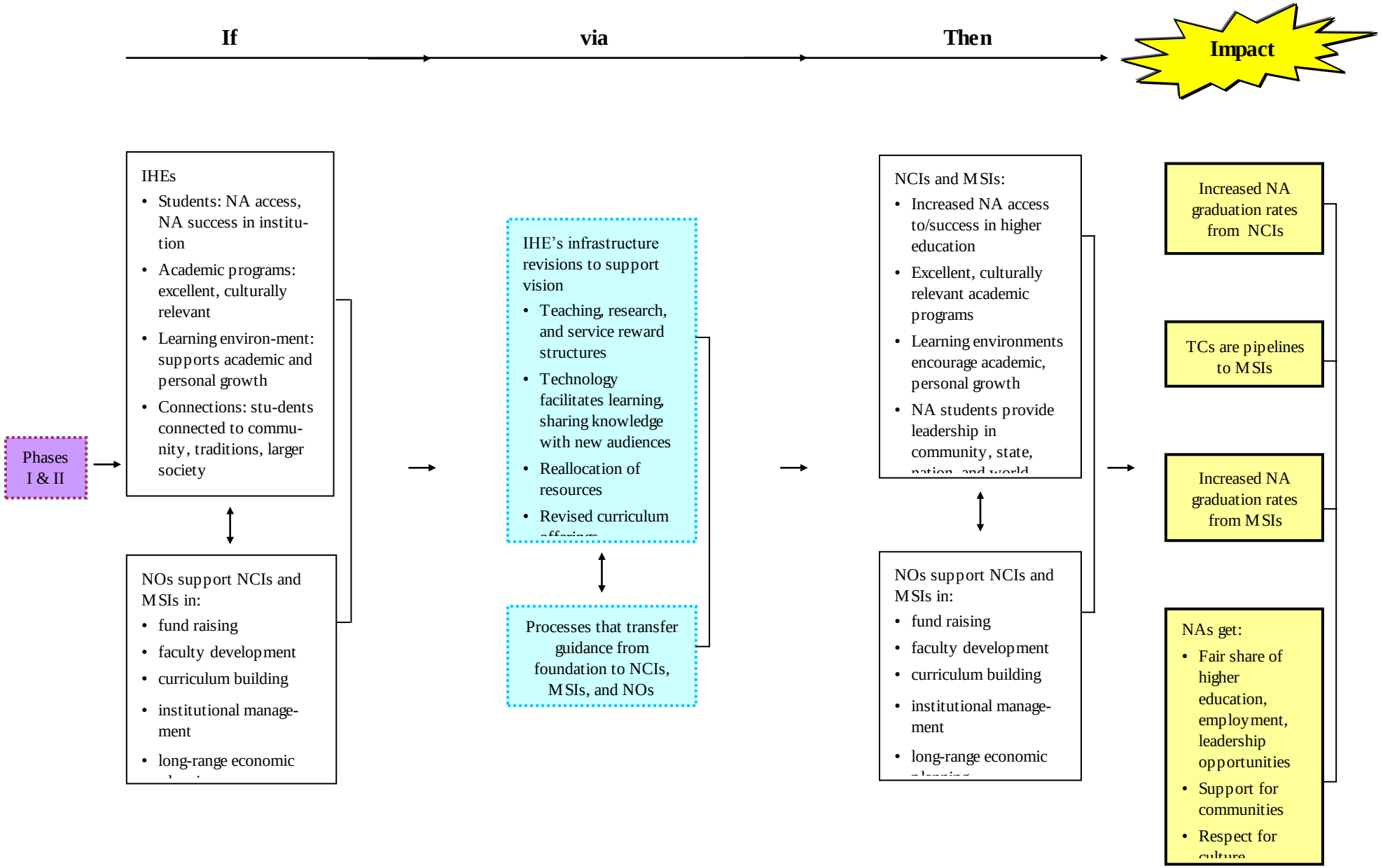
NAHEI Logic Model – Phase III