



# Evaluation and Learning Basics

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**Presentation by:**  
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**Presentation for:**  
Interact for Health



We facilitate meaningful learning and evaluation with and for our partners to advance equity and social justice.



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# Housekeeping



The slides and recording will be shared after the session.



If you have questions, please drop them in the chat.



Please stay muted to reduce background noise.

Use one word to describe your experience with evaluation.

34 responses



# Agenda

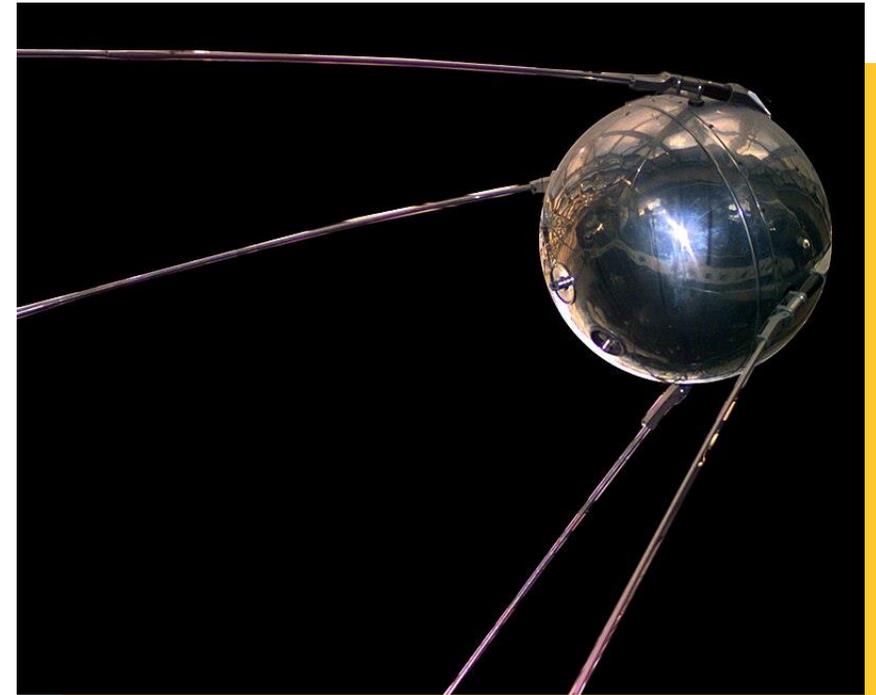
1. Evaluation basics
2. Theories of change
3. Asking and answering good questions
4. Finding the right indicator
5. Data collection and use

# Context and history

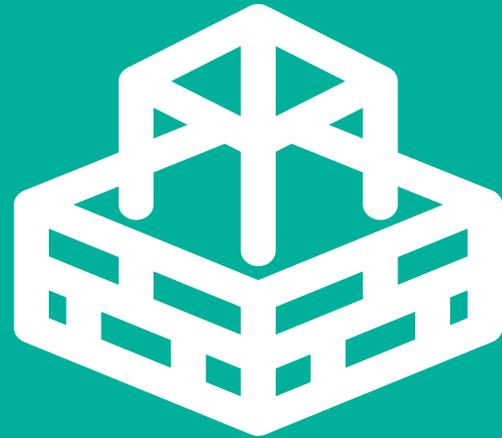
Emerged in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century; professionalized in the '60s and '70s with the rise of federal social programs.

Evaluation measured **outcomes**, **efficiency** and was a tool for **accountability**.

Like many research sciences, evaluation has **not always been conducted ethically** or with the interest of marginalized groups in mind.



*A replica of Sputnik 1, the first artificial satellite in the world to be put into outer space: the replica is stored in the National Air and Space Museum.*



# 1. Evaluation basics

# What is evaluation?

“Evaluation is any systematic process to judge merit, worth, or significance by combining evidence and values.”

(BetterEvaluation)

“Evaluation is a systematic and intentional process of gathering and analyzing data (quantitative and qualitative), to inform learning, decision-making and action.”

(FSG, 2014)

## What it is not (or shouldn't be)

- ✘ A checkbox
- ✘ A value-free or objective process
- ✘ An inaccessible black box

# Why do we use evaluation?



Funder requirement



Communication/storytelling (and sharing learning more broadly)



Program improvement and/or assessment



Community accountability



Organizational learning

# Principles for evaluation

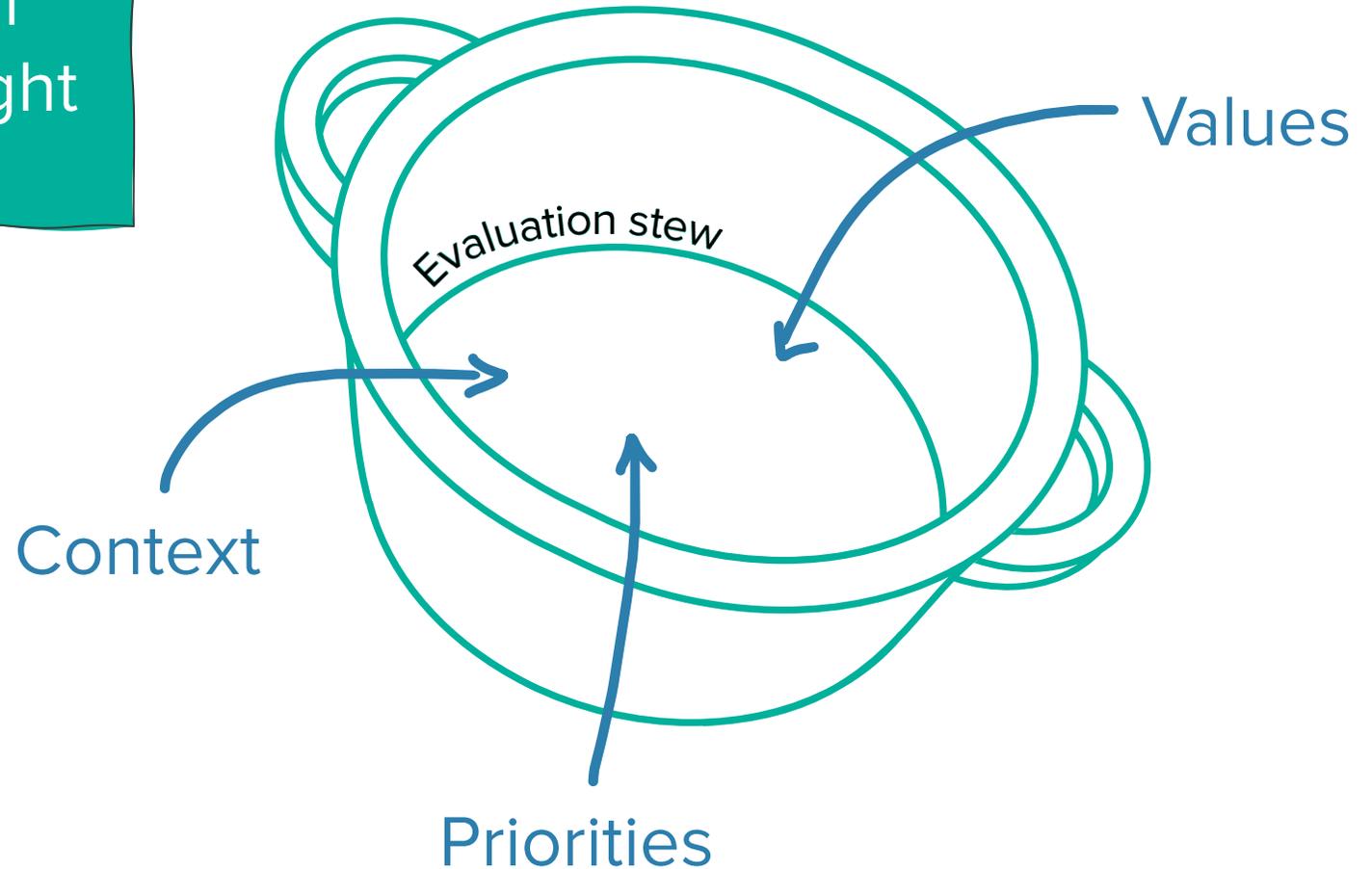
You **do not** need to be (or hire) a professional evaluator to already be doing evaluative activities.

Evaluation can and should be a tool to **advance equity** and amplify the voices of your community.

Evaluation needs to be **useful** to the end user.

# Evaluation frameworks

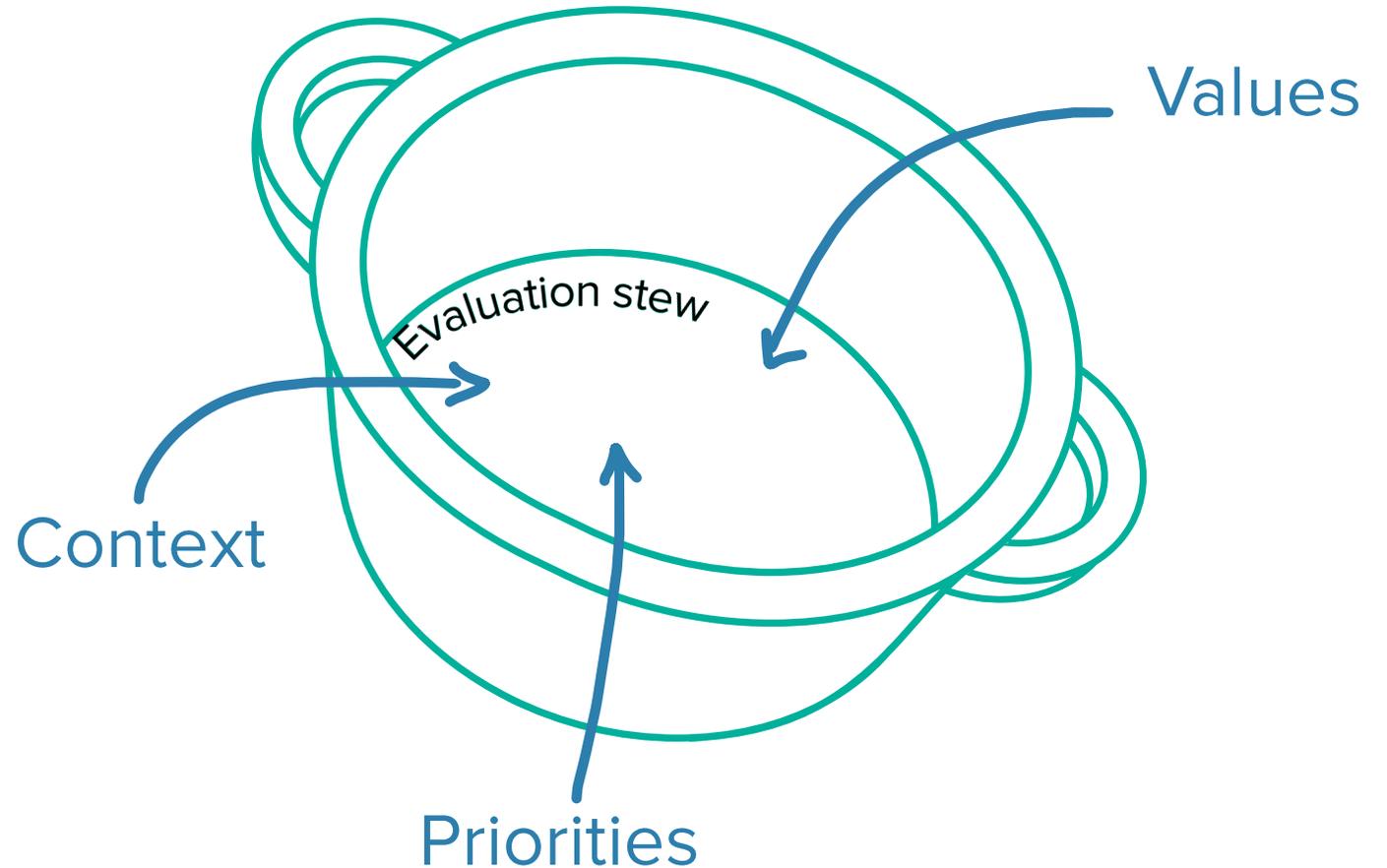
A framework lets you organize your evaluation and make sure all the right things go into it.



# Evaluation frameworks - example

## Advocacy Strategy Framework

- Flexible boundaries
- Uncertain timeframes
- Interim goals
- Different types of success
- Contribution, not attribution
- Adapted methods



# Evaluation frameworks

Framework	When to use it
<a href="#">Advocacy Evaluation</a>	Evaluating advocacy or policy change initiatives that focus on building awareness, will, or momentum for action.
<a href="#">Equitable Evaluation</a>	Evaluating an initiative that may have fraught or latent power dynamics, involves groups from different sociocultural backgrounds, or where we want to ensure the voices of those most affected by an issue are centered.
<a href="#">Developmental (aka Formative) Evaluation</a>	Evaluating an initiative in its infancy or in complex or emergent situations; good for pilot programs and conducting evaluations that will directly and relatively quickly inform changes in an initiative.
<a href="#">Outcome Evaluation</a>	Evaluating an initiative where we want to learn about its potential effect and influence on its area of focus and/or community of focus. May look at groups before and after going through a program to assess impact.
<a href="#">Process (aka Implementation) Evaluation</a>	Evaluating the execution and implementation of an initiative; may focus on whether it has accomplished its stated goals or user experience with accessing a program.
<a href="#">Culturally Responsive Evaluation</a>	Evaluating an initiative where the cultural context in which it is taking place is of particular importance and evaluation outcomes should be understood through its lens.
<a href="#">Medicine Wheel Evaluation</a>	Evaluating an initiative through the Medicine Wheel, an artifact present in many indigenous traditions in the Americas. Allows for a more holistic view of the evaluation process that involves often overlooked participants and outcomes more intentionally than traditional evaluation frameworks. Use is highly context-dependent and should be thought through very carefully, especially when using outside of an Indigenous context.

**...and so many more.**

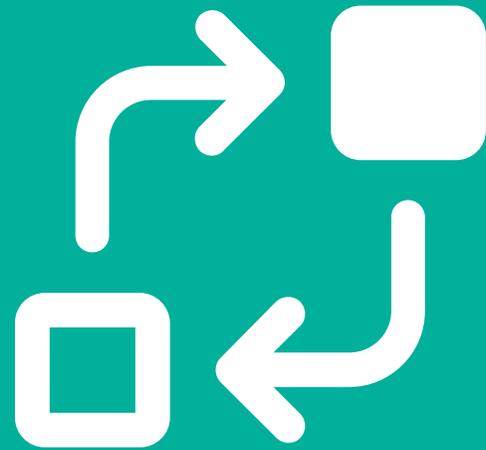
# More resources

## Online:

- Better Evaluation: <https://www.betterevaluation.org/>
- Center for Evaluation Innovation: <https://www.evaluationinnovation.org/>
- Center for Family Research and Evaluation: <https://cfre.org.au/evaluation-the-basics/>

## Books:

- Patton, M.Q. (2021). Utilization-focused evaluation: The new century text (5th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

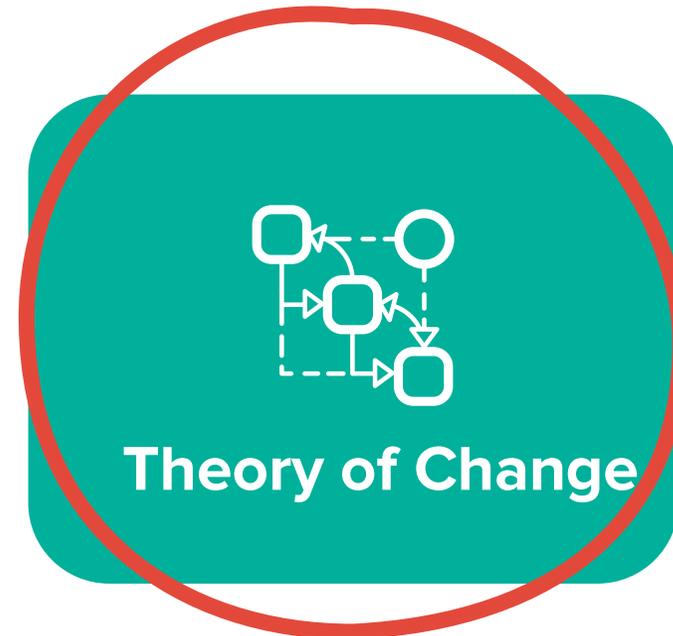
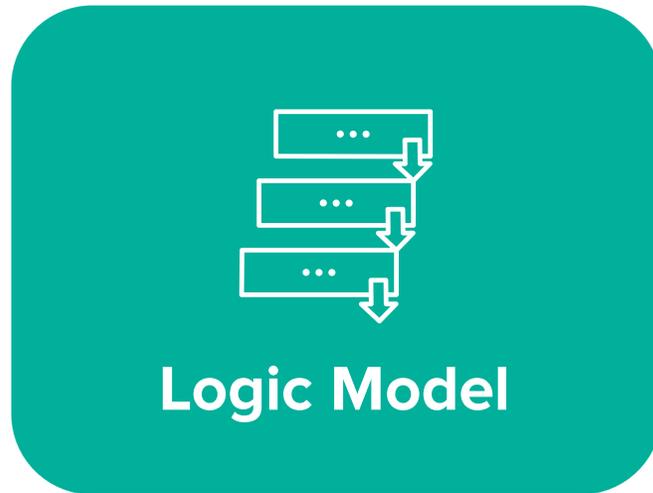


## 2. Theories of Change

# What is our baseline?

If we agree that evaluations are about figuring out if an intervention or program is working as intended, **we need to define what “working as intended” looks like.**

Two common tools:



# Benefits of a Theory of Change



Reflection on assumptions



Assessment of activity alignment

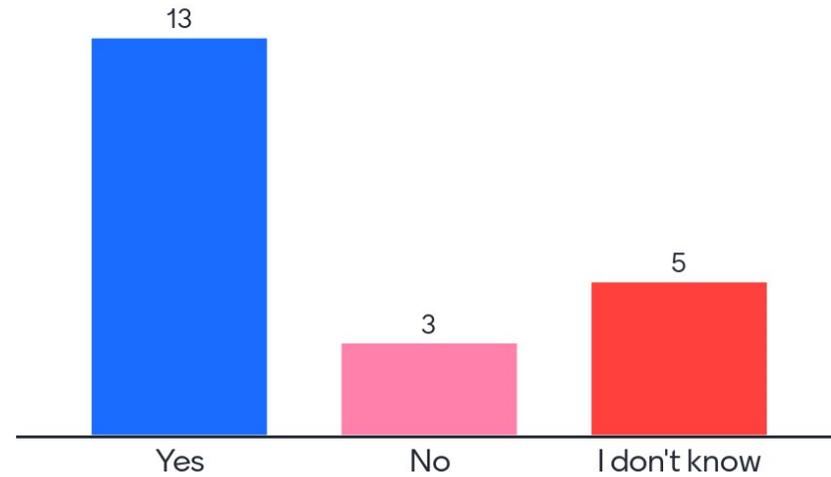


Articulation of work

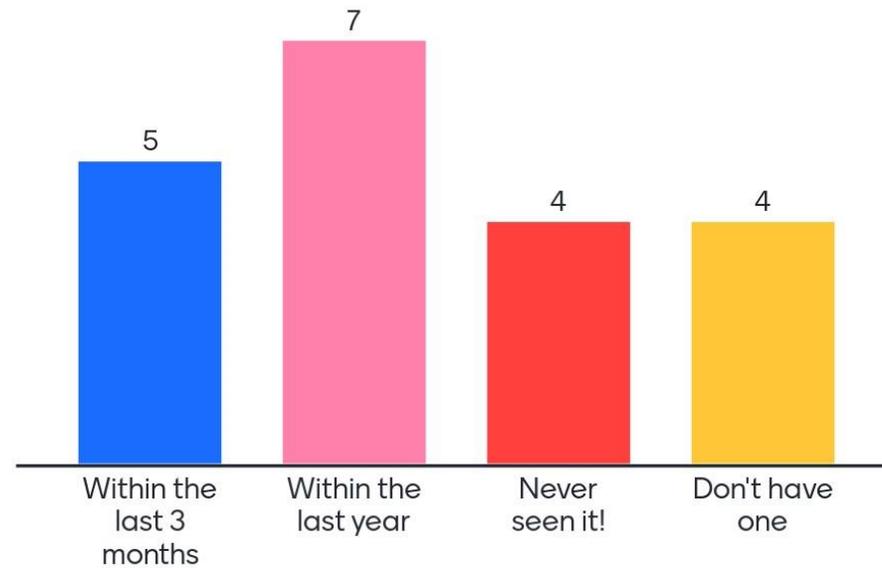


Understanding of resource investment

# Does your organization have a theory of change?



# When was the last time you looked at or revisited your theory of change?



# Theory of Change: Goal

**Goal:** The goal is a **specific and achievable, but ambitious change that's critical for solving a long-term problem**. It is at the center of the work and all actions you take hope to advance them.

Let's use a real example!

# Theory of Change: Goal

Who or what is changed by your work?

*Caregivers of color are treated equitably in the workplace and are able to care for their own and their family's health and wellbeing.*

# Theory of Change: Goal

*Caregivers of color are treated equitably in the workplace and are able to care for their own and their family's health and wellbeing.*

How are they changed?

**Tip:** If someone were to write an article about your organization in 5-10 years that describes what it has accomplished or contributed to, what would the headline say?

# Theory of Change: Strategies

**Strategies:** Strategies are the **related set of activities that are needed to implement your program or initiative** – what you will do with program resources in order to achieve program outcomes and, ultimately, your goal.

# Theory of Change: Strategies

**Goal:** Caregivers of color are treated equitably in the workplace and are able to care for their own and their family's health and wellbeing.

What activities do we do?

How can these activities be grouped into distinct strategies?

Strategies



**Education**  
Culturally appropriate trainings and distribution of legal information at community events



**Direct legal services**  
Individualized legal services, legal advice, and referrals

# Theory of Change: Outcomes

Different from outputs, which are direct products/actions of your activities

Outcomes (Short-Term, Interim, and Long-Term): Outcomes express the **results that your program or initiative intends to achieve if implemented as planned.**

Outcomes are the changes that occur or the difference that is made for individuals, groups, communities, and/or systems during or after the initiative.

They reflect the core achievements you hope for your initiative.

**Goal:** Caregivers of color are treated equitably in the workplace and are able to care for their own and their family's health and wellbeing.

Long-Term Outcomes

Before arriving at the goal, what changes will we see in our community / population / ecosystem?

Who and what could change?  
How could they change?

Interim Outcomes

Short-Term Outcomes

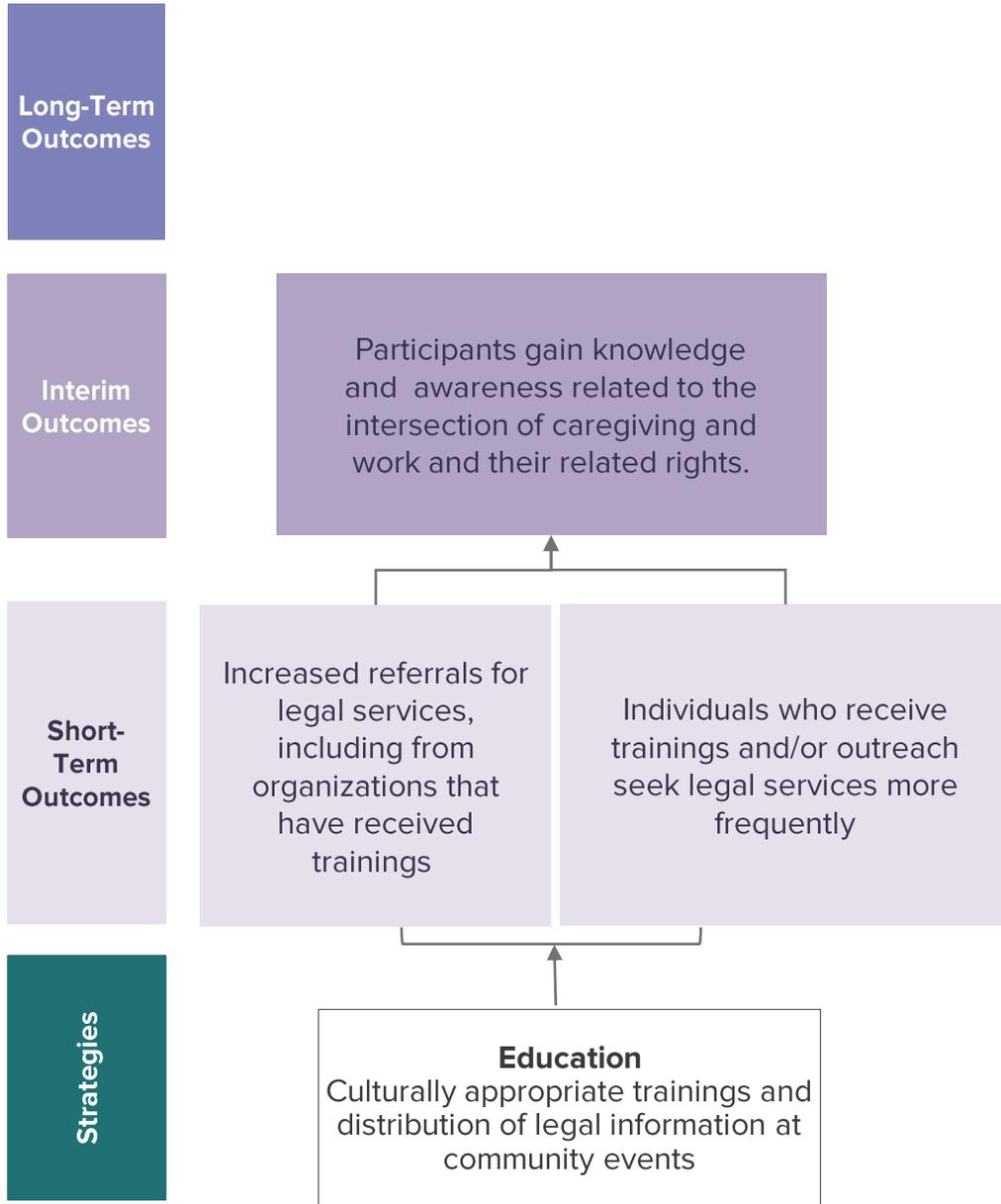
Increased referrals for legal services, including from organizations that have received trainings

Individuals who receive trainings and/or outreach seek legal services more frequently

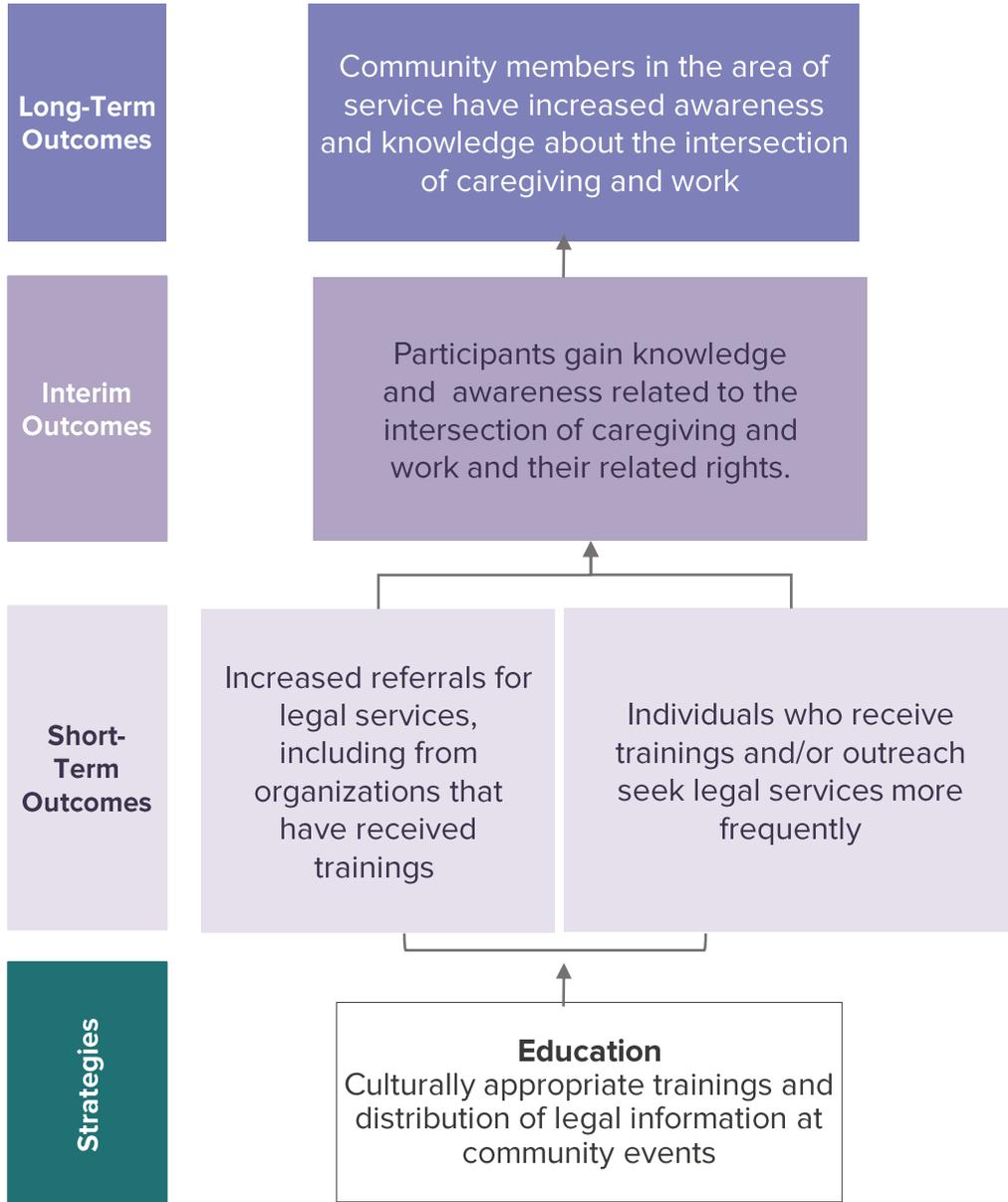
Strategies

**Education**  
Culturally appropriate trainings and distribution of legal information at community events

**Goal:** Caregivers of color are treated equitably in the workplace and are able to care for their own and their family's health and wellbeing.



**Goal:** Caregivers of color are treated equitably in the workplace and are able to care for their own and their family's health and wellbeing.



# Theory of Change: Assumptions

**Assumptions:** These are the **underlying values, logic, field knowledge, mental models, and biases** that shape why we choose to do the work we do and how we do it.

**For strategies:** Are there conditions that must be true for us to achieve the outcomes we expect from our activities and strategies? What barriers are in the way?

**For outcomes:** Are there certain outcomes or relationships between outcomes that our theory most hinges on? If those outcomes are not met, would we still have a viable path toward reaching our goal?

# Theory of Change: Assumptions

Strategies	Our work and information is accessible to and understood by those we are communicating with
Short-Term Outcomes	Organizational partners understand our mission and implement lessons we've given from trainings into their program
	Caregivers realize when their workplace rights are being violated
Interim Outcomes	Caregivers will feel that they can exercise their rights in the workplace after being provided legal information
Long-Term Outcomes	Increased awareness will actually motivate our systems and institutions to create radical change

# Who should be involved?

The best-placed people to create a theory of change are the **people involved in the work**, not just leadership.

Practically, this could look like a working group who involves others at different points in the process.

# More resources

- “Developing a Theory of Change” by the Annie E. Casey Foundation: <https://www.aecf.org/resources/theory-of-change>
- Center for Theory of Change: <https://www.theoryofchange.org/>
- Annotated examples by the USAID Learning Lab: <https://usaidlearninglab.org/resources/theory-change-toc-samples>

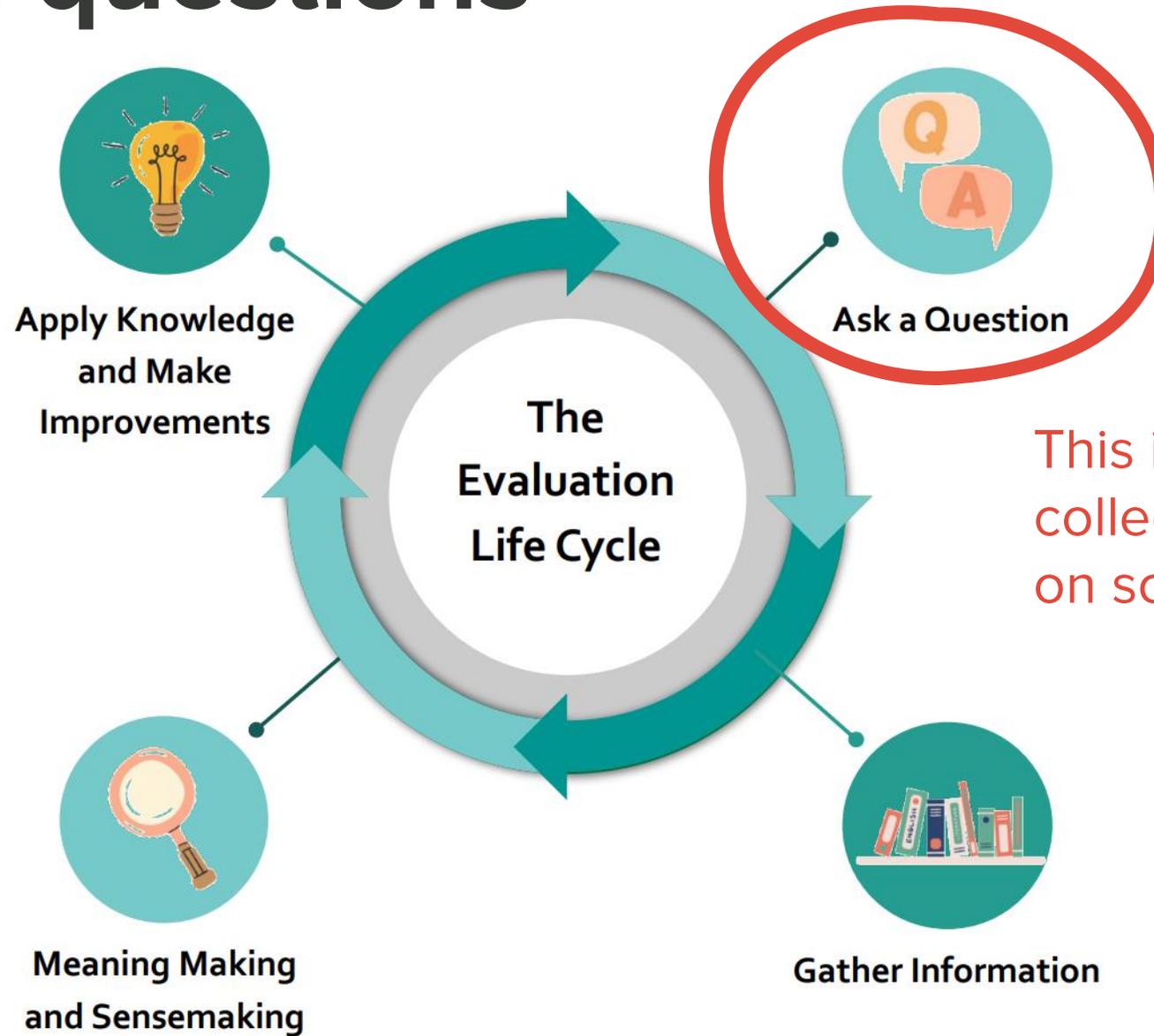
## To make a Theory of Change:

- PowerPoint – old reliable.
- Visio: <https://www.microsoft.com/visio>
- Theory Maker: <http://theorymaker.info/>
- Miro: <http://miro.com> (There’s a Theory of Change [template.](#))



### **3. Asking and answering good questions**

# Evaluation questions



This is WHY you are collecting information on something.

# Evaluation questions

Many different types of evaluation questions, one common way of categorizing them is:

- **Process questions**: How did the actual intervention implementation compare to the initial plan? What changed and why? What challenges did people encounter when trying to access our service? *How accessible are our services to our target demographic?*
- **Outcome questions**: Who did the intervention serve? What did participants report as the most impactful part of our service? To what extent have participants' attitudes changed after an intervention? *How and to what extent have we met training participants' needs, including increasing their awareness and knowledge about their rights?*

# Evaluation plan

Evaluation question	Outcomes	Indicators	Data collection methods	Frequency and ownership
How and to what extent have we met training participants' needs, including increasing their awareness and knowledge about their rights?	<p><b>Short-term:</b> Increased referrals for legal services, including from organizations that have received trainings</p> <p>Individuals who receive trainings and/or outreach seek legal services more frequently</p>	<p>Number of referrals for legal services, by organization, per quarter</p> <p>Number of new legal services clients per month, disaggregated by how they heard about the org</p>	<p>Internal database</p> <p>Internal database</p>	<p>Frequency: Quarterly</p> <p>Who is responsible: Rebecca</p> <p>Who is using/when: -Rebecca, for grant reporting -Cory, to improve services</p>

# More resources

## Evaluation questions:

- How to write good evaluation questions by Eval Academy  
<https://www.evalacademy.com/articles/how-to-write-good-evaluation-questions>
- How to ask powerful questions by the Center for Evaluation Innovation (webinar): <https://www.evaluationinnovation.org/presentation/asking-powerful-questions/>
- Emergent Learning questions: <https://emergentlearning.org/el-questions/>

## To develop an evaluation plan:

- Interact for Health has a template, and they are happy to help you develop an evaluation plan!



## **4. Finding the right indicator**

# Indicators

## What are they?

- Generally quantitative data
- Usually not the answer to the question in and of themselves, but a way to measure and communicate about your work

## What are they for?

- Can be tied to evaluation questions or theory of change outcomes
- Often an easy and digestible way to share quick snapshots of your work

Caveat: should not be the **only** way you track and share your work.

## What are some indicators you currently use to track/measure your work?

Participation in webinars  
and other meetings

Changes in assessments  
over time

Number of times resource  
was downloaded

Attendance; volunteer  
hours

Results based  
accountability

Number of stories  
gathered

Community

surveys, evaluative reports,  
personal interactions

## What are some indicators you currently use to track/measure your work?

Meaningful interactions

How many times someone in our network has made state-level contact with an elected official

Community participation

progress monitoring tools

# program services provided

# of people attending, doing committee work

Feedbacks

Greenhouse gas emissions reduction ( a new one), partners engage, partners funded, partners supported through technical assistance, local spending facilitated



# What makes a good indicator?

	Quantity	Quality
Effort	<p><b>How much did we do?</b></p> <p># of training sessions given</p>	<p><b>How well did we do it?</b></p> <p>Feedback scores for training sessions</p>
Effect	<p><b>Is anyone better off?</b></p> <p># of people who attended training sessions</p> <p>% of attendees who report increased knowledge of their workplace rights</p>	

Generally more powerful for communication

# What makes a good indicator?

	Quantity	Quality
Effort	<p><b>How much did we do?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li># of participants</li><li># of sessions</li><li># of businesses</li></ul>	<p><b>How well did we do it?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>T imeliness</li><li>R atio</li><li>A ttendance</li><li>C ompletion to task</li><li>S tandards</li></ul>
Effect	<p><b>Is anyone better off?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>B ehavior</li><li>A ttitude</li><li>C ircumstance</li><li>K nowledge</li><li>S kills</li></ul>	

# What makes a good indicator?



## Communication

Power

Data are easy to understand and have clarity with diverse audiences.



## Proxy

Power

Data are meaningful and tell us necessary and important information about progress toward goals.



## Data

Power

Data that are reliable, consistent, and available.

# What makes a good indicator?

	Feedback scores for training sessions	# of people who attended training sessions	% of attendees who report increased knowledge of their workplace rights
Communication	Medium	High	Medium
Proxy	Low	Medium	High
Data	High	High	Medium

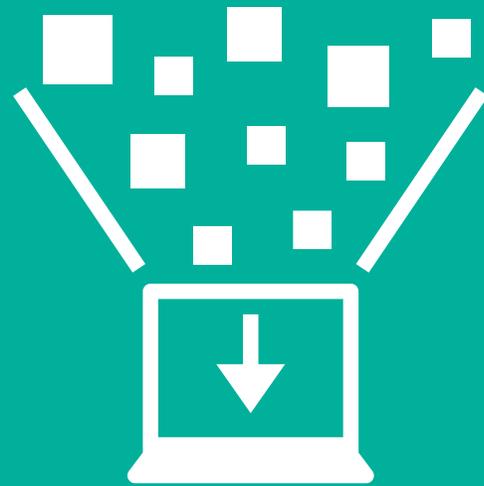
# What makes a good indicator?

## **Other considerations when picking/designing an indicator:**

- Who is coming up with these measures?
- Do the measures make sense to the people doing the work? To the people who are being measured?
- What assumptions underlay the selection of indicators?

# More resources

- Use measures, indicators, or metrics by Better Evaluation: <https://www.betterevaluation.org/frameworks-guides/rainbow-framework/describe/use-measures-indicators-or-metrics>
- SMART indicators by Compass: <https://thecompassforsbc.org/how-to-guide/how-develop-indicators>
- Developing SMARTIE Indicators of Success by Sharp Insight: <https://www.sharp-insight.com/blog/smartieindicators>
- Resources for Social Determinants of Health Indicators by NACCHO: <https://www.naccho.org/uploads/downloadable-resources/Final-Resources-on-Social-Determinants-of-Health-112811.pdf>



## 5. Data collection and use

# Data collection methods

Anything is “data” if you capture it systematically, and there are so many ways to capture data!

We want to focus on a few less common methods.



# Data collection: learning logs

## What is a learning log?

It's a systematic way of capturing challenges, successes, and experiments in your work in real time.

They can also be a great repository for pulling anecdotes and stories or be analyzed systematically for larger themes.

A	B	C	D	E	F	G
LEARNING LOG						
Entry #	Date	Name of person who filled this out	Topic	Significant achievements	Experiments / New efforts in progress	What needs to be kept the same / successes / factors of success
1	10/11/23	Jane Doe	Relationship-building Capacity Facilitation Event Ownership	<i>The org had a successful and energizing annual convening. The convening met all the planning committee's goals including creating an event where participants could connect, build relationships, and strategize. One organizer felt the agenda for the convening embodied everything that the org is.</i>	<i>The organizers involved experimented with involving community of practice members in the actual facilitation of the convening. The organizers shared the convening agenda beforehand to the cohort and asked if anyone wanted facilitate any of the items. At least one community of practice member participated and helped facilitate an activity.</i>	<i>The convening had intentional time built-in for connection among participants. This included a 2-hour reception and a caucusing activity. The organizers used icebreakers to help connect the cohort. Participants were excited to connect in person.</i>

# Data collection: learning logs

## How to use it

1. Any team member can contribute at any time.
2. Set times to revisit the learning log periodically as a team to reflect on what you are learning or themes that are emerging.
  - a. This can be a portion of a standing meeting.

A	B	C	D	E	F	G
LEARNING LOG						
Entry #	Date	Name of person who filled this out	Topic	Significant achievements	Experiments / New efforts in progress	What needs to be kept the same / successes / factors of success
1	10/11/23	Jane Doe	<i>Relationship-building Capacity Facilitation Event Ownership</i>	<i>The org had a successful and energizing annual convening. The convening met all the planning committee's goals including creating an event where participants could connect, build relationships, and strategize. One organizer felt the agenda for the convening embodied everything that the org is.</i>	<i>The organizers involved experimented with involving community of practice members in the actual facilitation of the convening. The organizers shared the convening agenda beforehand to the cohort and asked if anyone wanted facilitate any of the items. At least one community of practice member participated and helped facilitate an activity.</i>	<i>The convening had intentional time built-in for connection among participants. This included a 2-hour reception and a caucusing activity. The organizers used icebreakers to help connect the cohort. Participants were excited to connect in person.</i>

# Data collection: before/after-action reflections

## What are before/after-action reflections?

**Before-action reflections:** This set of questions allow teams to think about **what they're hoping for prior to the beginning of a program, intervention**, piece of work, anticipate challenges, and define success.

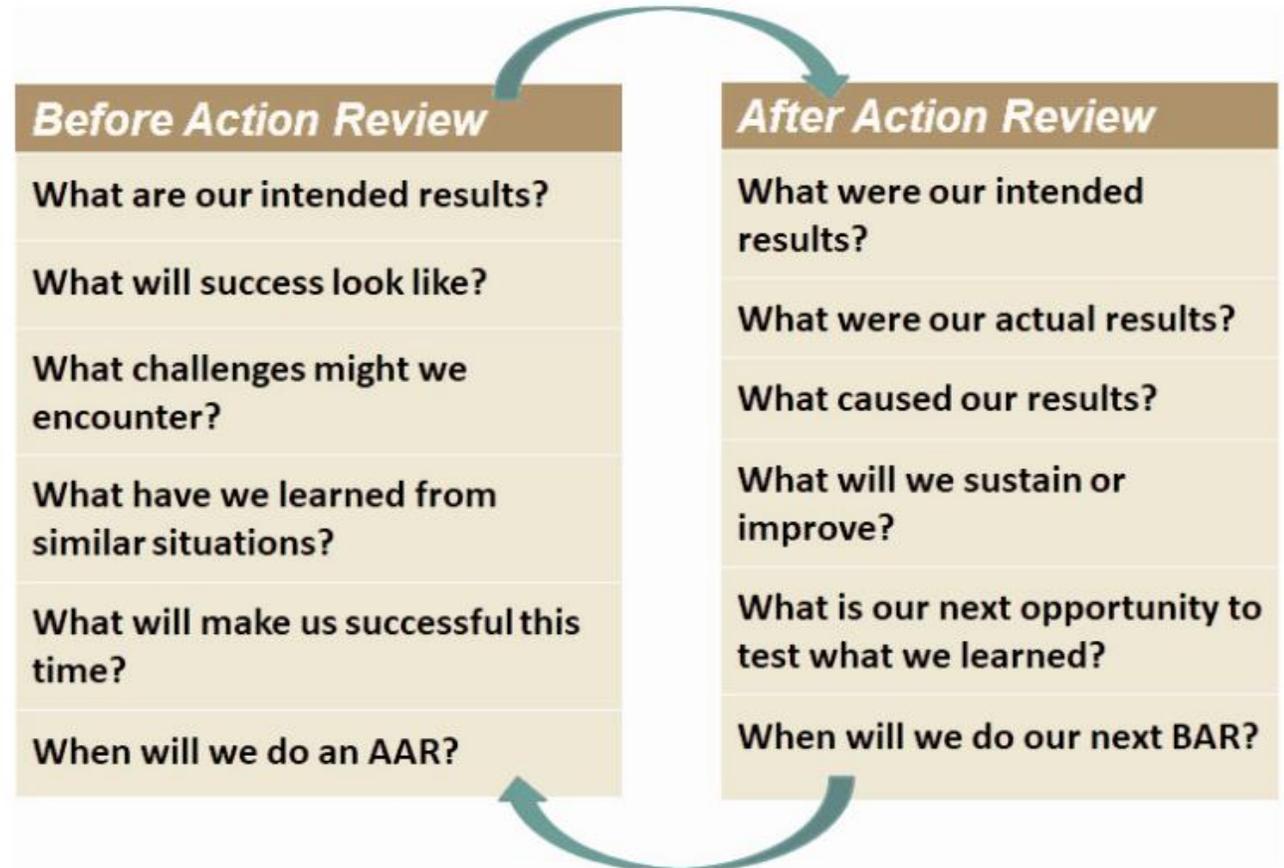
**After-action reflections:** This set of questions allow teams to think **how the work went, what could be improved, what went well, and if results aligned with those outlined at the beginning**. This can be even more simply summed up as asking:

- What happened?
- So what?
- Now what?

# Data collection: before/after-action reflections

## How to use them

1. Integrate these questions into kickoff and closeout meetings.
2. What is discussed can be captured in the learning log.



# Data collection: final thoughts



Don't do more than you have to!



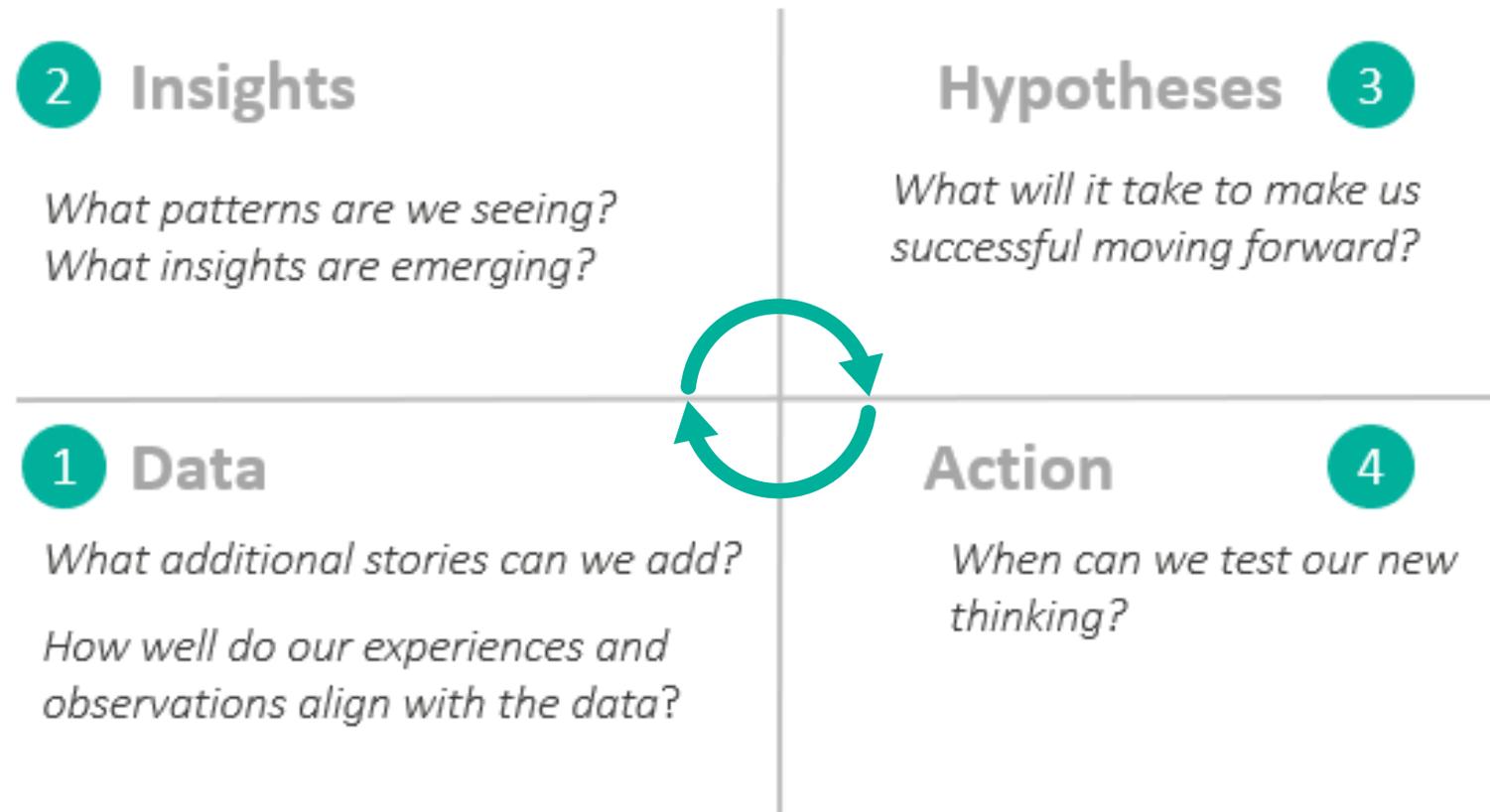
Think of standing meetings or regular interactions with the people you're supporting where data (even quantitative) could be captured.



The people doing the work are the best placed people to gather data with and from.

# Data use

We have all this data in our learning log and from our before/after reflections. Now what? **What do we mean when we say “reflect on the data”?**



And always ask: who should be involved in these conversations?

# More resources

- Emergent Learning practices: <https://emergentlearning.org/practices/>
- Data placemats and emergent learning tables: <https://medium.com/innovationnetwork/data-placemats-emergent-learning-tables-ea65352ebac9>
- Learning Log Template: <https://tinyurl.com/learning-log-template>



**Wrap-up**

# Wrap-up

We covered a lot, and **we barely scratched the surface.**

If you take away anything from today, we hope it's the importance of remaining:



**Flexible**



**Realistic**



**Iterative**

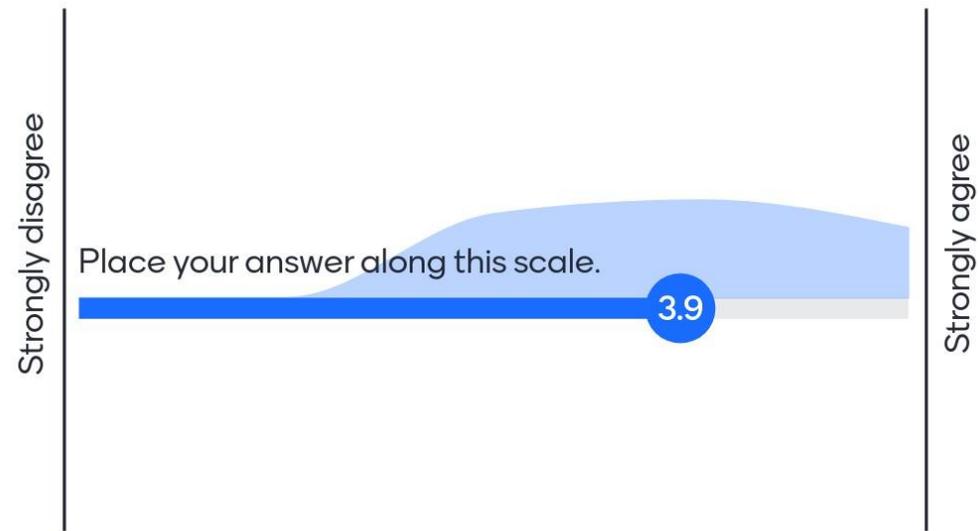
# Interact for Health Resources

Interact for Health can help you develop an evaluation plan and be a thought partner in your evaluative work!

Contact information:

Michelle Lydenberg [mlydenberg@interactforhealth.org](mailto:mlydenberg@interactforhealth.org)

Compared to the beginning of this session, I feel more comfortable with evaluation.



## What other topics would you like to cover within evaluation? What other questions do you have? What resources do you need to do more evaluation?

Issues that you may typically run into during evaluation and problem solving tips.

Strategies to increase survey responses

How to create easy to understand dashboards and reports

How to prioritize what metrics/data to measure. How to most effectively use your data.

Would love to spend time exploring three or four types of evaluation types.

Understanding from org leadership and external orgs (funders) about the types of power in eval design you discussed (e.g. proxy power) to have fairer expectations

How to collect data in a way that shows program effectiveness - hopefully to get future funding for the project

favorite data viz tools and tutorials



## What other topics would you like to cover within evaluation? What other questions do you have? What resources do you need to do more evaluation?

How to determine what the best indicators to use are and how to narrow down what to track

How to be sure process is equitable for our partners

Practice, using programs to organize data

How the unique background of individuals can contribute to evaluations and learnings

Revisit our indicators

More ideas for low-cost and minimal effort data collection methods

Examples of what other orgs do to evaluate programs

Figuring out the most core data to track, making sure we're not tracking surface level data



What other topics would you like to cover within evaluation? What other questions do you have? What resources do you need to do more evaluation?

Not sure

Not sure



**What is one action you can take right away to start or improve your evaluation?**

# Thank you!

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