Evaluative Thinking

Identifying Assumptions

ET WORKSHOP

ROUND 1 • GROUP 1

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Introductions

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Acknowledgements

Why am I here?

I believe that evaluative thinking can make more effective those who are deeply committed to and authentically engaged in making the world a better place. Through [these workshops] I aspire to make my own small contribution toward realizing the vision of an experimenting global community, one characterized by commitment to reality-testing, respect for different perspectives, and open dialogue about evidence – a world in which ongoing learning is valued and practiced, and knowledge is generated and used.

Michael Quinn Patton
Program evaluation consultant

Introductions

Please share:

- Your name
- Your project(s)/area of work
- When you hear the word “river”, what comes to mind?

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ET Workshop Series

	Target audience	Round 1 Identifying Assumptions	Round 2 Seeking Evidence	Round 3 Taking Action
Group 1	Field-based staff	X		
Group 2	Senior program staff			
Group 3	Country leadership			

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ET Workshop Series

NINE WORKSHOPS IN ALL: 1 PER GROUP PER ROUND

GROUP 1
FIELD-BASED STAFF

GROUP 2
SENIOR PROGRAM STAFF

GROUP 3
COUNTRY LEADERSHIP

ROUND 1

- Introduction to evaluative thinking
- Identifying assumptions
- Multiple perspectives
- Theory of Change (ToC) Pathway Models

ROUND 2

- Using the ToC Pathway Models to determine learning plan scope
- Developing learning questions
- Components of a learning plan
- Learning plan alignment

ROUND 3

- Making meaning from results
- Participatory analysis
- Making informed decisions (utilization)
- Communicating results

A little housekeeping…

- Shared norms for the workshop
- Consent form and pre-workshop survey
- Post-workshop survey

Feel free to ask questions any time!

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Workshop Goals

You will…

1. Understand what evaluative thinking is, why it is important and how to practice it
2. Practice developing ToC Pathway Models
3. Learn about how to work with assumptions, including turning assumptions into questions
4. Identify barriers to ET and ways to overcome them
5. Leave feeling motivated, with a new perspective on MEAL, so that you can continue to make the greatest impact with your program(s)

Workshop Outputs

You will leave this workshop with…

1. A *draft* theory of change (in the form of a Pathway Model) for your project, in line with the new MEAL Procedure 1.1.
2. A learning-to-action plan for incorporating ET into your everyday work.

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Your Workshop Goals

What would YOU like to get out of this workshop?

"For me, this workshop will be a success if…"

1. Individually, jot down up to three ideas on a piece of paper.
2. Share: As we go around the room, select one goal to share that has not been shared by someone else.

Agenda Day 1

Time	Task
8:30am	Introductions and goals, consent form and pre-workshop survey
9:15am	Simple scenario, Introduction to ET
10:00am	Alternative explanations
10:30am	Break
10:45am	Introduction to ET and assumptions
12:15pm	Lunch
1:15pm	Identifying assumptions
3:00pm	Break
3:15pm	ET and your program: Context and assumptions
4:30pm	Reflect and debrief, daily evaluation
5:00pm	Close

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Simple Scenario

HANDOUT

What is Evaluative Thinking?

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The motorcycle is the project; the sidecar is MEAL, traditionally seen as slightly separate, an extra burden, though part of the project. Think of ET as the gasoline that runs the bike and sidecar.

What is Evaluative Thinking?

Overcoming our own prejudices
and our avoidance of the truth.

If I say "**doctor**", what image comes to mind?

What about "**hairdresser**?"

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What is Evaluative Thinking?

"Evaluative thinking is a way of doing business." (PATTON)

"…being results oriented, reflective, questioning, and using evidence to test assumptions." (WIND & CARDEN)

"Reflective Practice" (BAKER & BRUNER)

"questioning, reflecting, learning, and modifying … It is a constant state-of-mind within an organization's culture and all its systems." (BENNETT & JESSANI)

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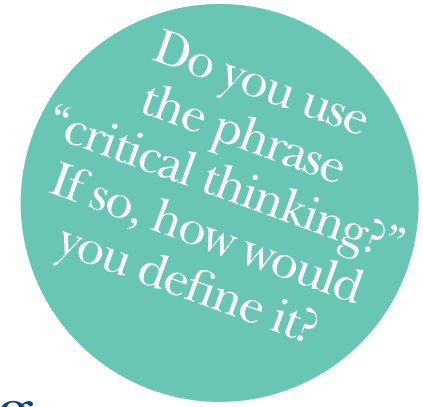
Evaluative Thinking: Formal definition

ET is critical thinking applied in the context of evaluation (or MEAL), motivated by an attitude of inquisitiveness and a belief in the value of evidence, that involves:

1. Identifying assumptions
2. Posing thoughtful [learning] questions
3. Pursuing deeper understanding through reflection and multiple perspective taking
4. Making informed decisions in preparation for action



(BUCKLEY, ARCHIBALD, HARGRAVES & TROCHIM, 2015)

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Further Reading

Buckley, J., Archibald, T., Hargraves, M., & Trochim, W. (2015). Defining and Teaching Evaluative Thinking: Insights from Research on Critical Thinking. *American Journal of Evaluation* Vol 36, Issue 3, 2015

Embedded ET creates lasting impact

Begin by distinguishing evaluative thinking from doing an evaluation. Evaluation is an activity that produces reports; evaluative thinking produces effective organizations. Evaluative thinking is systematic, intentional and ongoing attention to expected results. It focuses on how results are achieved, what evidence is needed to inform future actions and how to improve future results.

Michael Quinn Patton
Program evaluation consultant

Embedded ET creates lasting impact

Evaluative thinking is most meaningful when it is embedded in an organization's culture … Evaluative thinking is what characterizes learning organizations.

Michael Quinn Patton
Program evaluation consultant

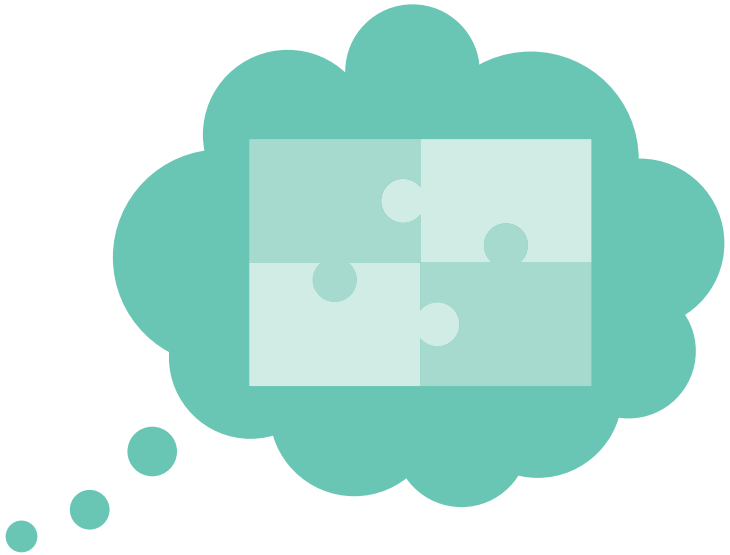
Embedded ET creates lasting impact

Infusing evaluative thinking into organizational culture involves examining how decision makers and staff incorporate evaluative inquiry into everything they do as part of ongoing attention to mission fulfilment and continuous improvement. It is mainstreamed and becomes central to the work, rather than an add-on, and it is a matter of meaningful reflection and learning, rather than a compliance mandate.

Michael Quinn Patton
Program evaluation consultant

Critical Thinking vs. Evaluative Thinking

Critical thinking: Using careful analysis to form a judgement; not taking things at face value.



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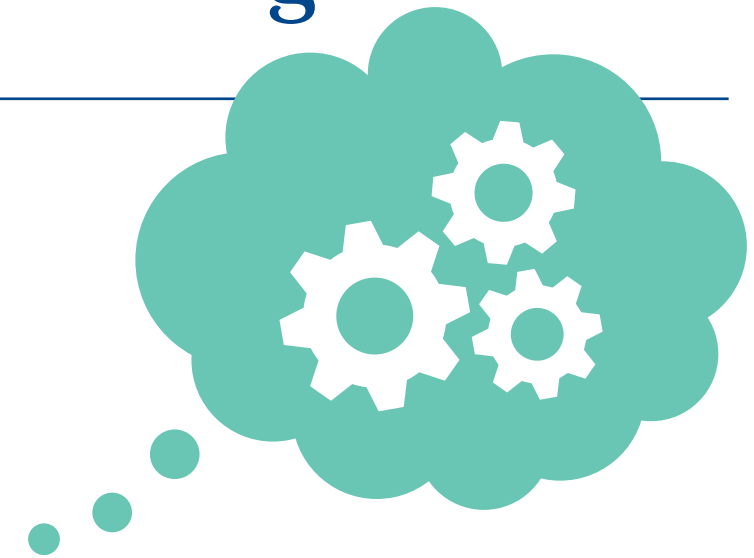
Critical Thinking vs. Evaluative Thinking



Evaluative thinking is
critical thinking plus …
proactive behaviors such as …

- Posing questions
- Seeking evidence
- Deciding to act (or not act) based on evidence

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Evaluative Thinking:

Where it fits in

MEAL requires:

- Knowledge: understanding of the "how" and "why" of basic MEAL concepts, terms, methods and resources
- Working skills: observation, analysis, communication, etc.
- Thinking skills: reflection, questioning, strategizing, mental modeling, perspective taking, decision making, the ability to identify assumptions
- Attitudes: belief in the value of MEAL, an intrinsic motivation to pursue evidence

ET

Why is Evaluative Thinking crucial?

Continuous reflection and learning allows us to respond and adapt.

In other words…

We can improve our work more efficiently in order to make a larger impact.

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Why is Evaluative Thinking crucial?

We can minimize risks associated with relying on our assumptions

Every assumption represents a risk. Some assumptions/risks are more critical than others.

Evaluative thinking allows us to manage these risks.

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Why is Evaluative Thinking crucial?

Use!

How evaluations are used affects the spending of billions of dollars to fight problems of poverty, disease, ignorance, joblessness, mental anguish, crime, hunger and inequality.

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HANDOUT

The MEAL System

This diagram shows the key ways in which monitoring and evaluation (M&E) and accountability and learning (A&L) work together in a MEAL system.

HANDOUT

What does Evaluative Thinking sound and look like?

Photo by CRS staff

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Evaluative Thinking

What it sounds and looks like in a program work context

Things you may hear:

- Why are we assuming X?
- How do we know X?
- What evidence do we have for X?
- What is the thinking behind the way we do X?
- How could we do X better?
- How does X connect to our intended outcomes?
- "Different community members perspectives on this are X, Y, and Z..."

Things you may see:

- More evidence gathering and sharing
- More feedback (all directions)
- Reflective conversations among staff, beneficiaries, leadership, etc.
- More ToCs/illustrating thinking
- More motivation to do systematic MEAL work
- Program evolution
- More effective staff and programs
- Greater field staff influence over project decisions

Seeking Evidence

- When thinking about claims and assumptions on which those claims are based, when do you need evidence? (*for what purpose?*)
- What kind of evidence?
- What counts as credible evidence? (*credible to whom?*)

We use evaluative thinking in everyday life; like when we make decisions while buying groceries.

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Learning to think evaluatively

- Anyone can do it, but it is not trivial and requires regular practice
- Enable regular practice with a checklist that prompts ET anywhere and everywhere
- Requires a “safe space” for questioning, identifying assumptions, making suggestions
- Start with small changes and ramp up (can’t change the culture of a program or organization over night), e.g. discuss ET experiences in team meetings
- Don’t be shy to try it alongside peers and colleagues – no ideas are wrong, it’s just that some may turn out to be better than others

Learning to think evaluatively

Experience in thinking can be won, like all experience in doing something, only through practice.

HANNAH ARENDT
PHILOSOPHER

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Ideas we've given leaders for supporting Evaluative Thinking

- Be open to questioning, various perspectives and plausible alternatives
- Trust-based, safe communication among all staff, beneficiaries, supervisors and other stakeholders
- Demonstrate reflection (*My observations indicate I may have been more effective if …*)
- Identify ET champions and provide time and space for them to train or support others
- Build ET into everyday activities (planning meetings, regular communication, etc.)
- Reward evaluative thinking
- Other ideas?

Alternative Explanations

Alternative Explanations

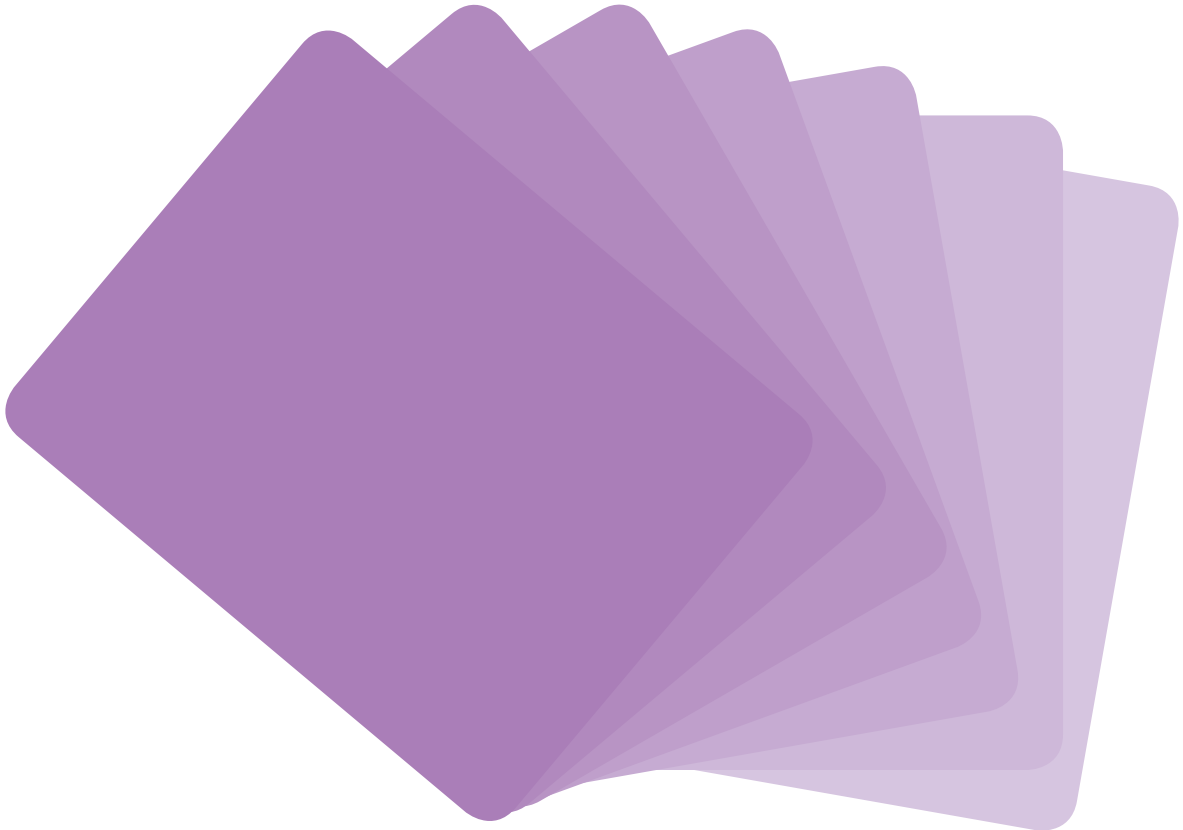
1. The children are training the dog to pull a cart.

2. The children need the dog to let go of the rope so that they can use it to pull a cart.

3. The dog is holding a rope for children playing jump rope.

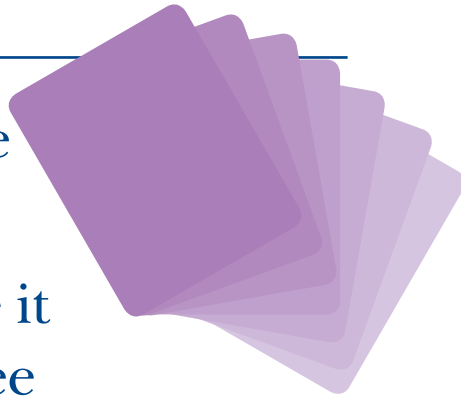
ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION

Alternative Explanations Game



ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION

Alternative Explanations Game



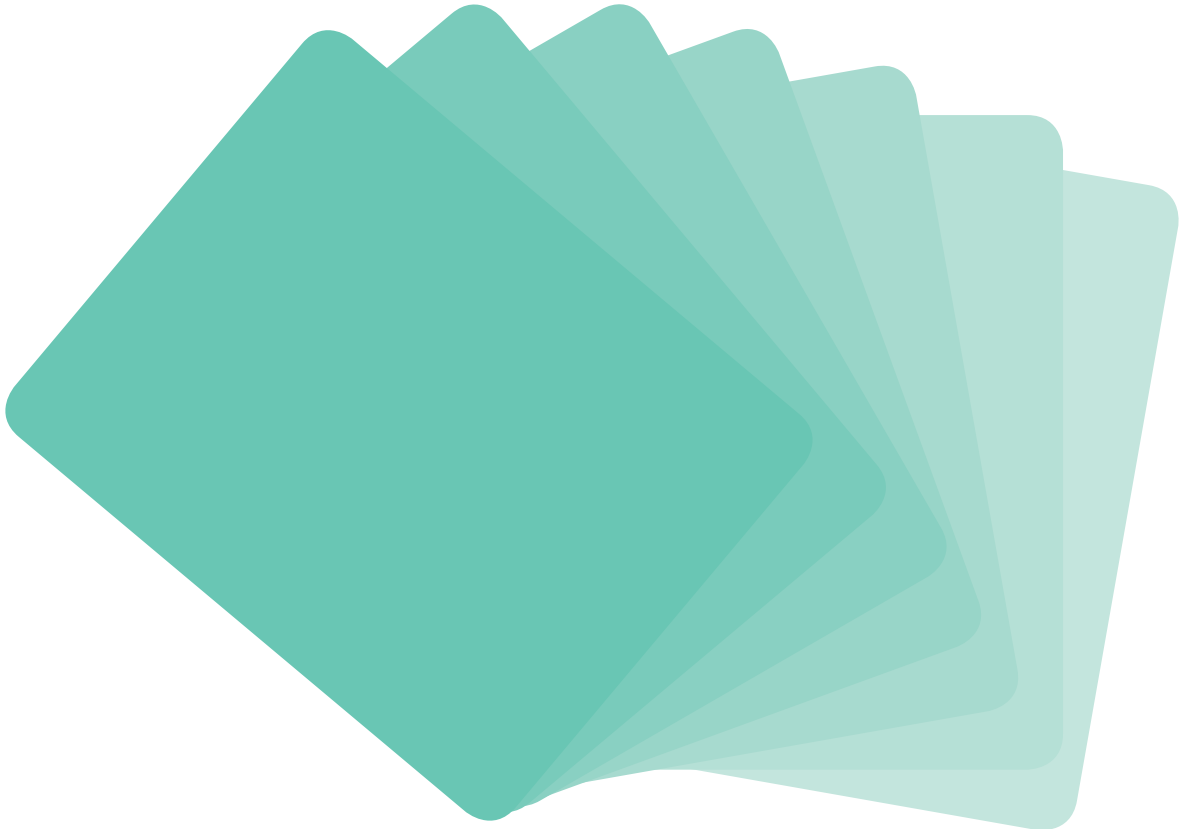
- Stack your cards, face down, in the middle of the table
- The person whose birthday is nearest goes first

1. Turn over the top card so that everyone can see it
2. Offer an explanation (scenario) for what you see
3. Pass the card to your right
4. The next person has to offer another, alternative explanation that has not yet been shared
5. Continue around the table until everyone has had a turn
6. The person who goes last is the next to draw a card and offers the first explanation.
7. Continue until all the cards are gone or until time is up

Break

DEBRIEF

Alternative Explanations Game



HANDOUT

Identifying Assumptions

An **assumption** is an idea, thought or belief that is taken for granted or taken as a given. There are:

- **Explicit assumptions** that have been identified and that one is fully aware of; and
- **Implicit assumptions** that influence someone without her or him being aware of it.

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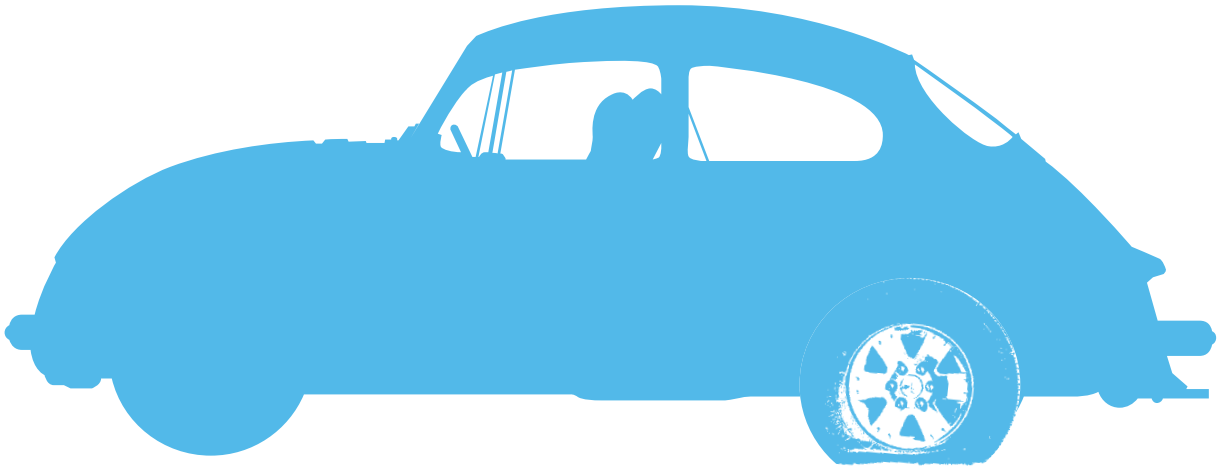
Are assumptions always bad?

No! Assumptions are a necessary part of survival. We ALL make assumptions.

The important thing is to identify assumptions and be conscious about choosing to accept them, seeking evidence for them, or planning to work around them as needed.



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ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION

HANDOUT

Media Critique

Identifying Assumptions

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Media Critique

Read the newspaper article provided. Consider the following:

1. What assumptions—explicit and implicit—are in this newspaper article?
2. What evidence, if any, does the journalist use to back up the claims made in these assumptions?
3. What evidence would be needed if the journalist was to better back up the claims made in these assumptions?

DISCUSSION

Media Critique

- How does it feel to be a critic?
- Is it something you would normally do? In your personal life? In you work life?
- Why or why not?
- Why might this skill be important in program work?

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ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION

HANDOUT

Thinking Hats

Positive

Creative

"Big Picture"

Factual

Negative

Emotional

ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION

HANDOUT

Thinking Hats

- Review the scenario presented in the handout, *Thinking Hats*
- In small groups, assign a different color hat to each group member
- Discuss the proposal of the senior staff to organize and manage project quarterly meetings in a way that will encourage evaluative thinking
- Allow each group member to have a say from their perspective (i.e. according to their hat color)
- Be prepared to report out on the various ideas that are discussed

DISCUSSION

Thinking Hats

- How did it feel to take on a different role?
- How could using Thinking Hats contribute to evaluative thinking?
- What is your opinion about using Thinking Hats as a tool with community members?

Lunch

ENERGIZER

Bottle Race

ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION

HANDOUT

Scenario Analysis

Read the provided scenario.

With your group, discuss the following:

- What assumptions – explicit and implicit – do you think the characters are operating under? Can you list at least three assumptions for each character?
- What alternative approaches or interpretations could these characters have used if they were aware of their assumptions? What questions might they need to answer?
- What foundational assumptions are these characters operating under?

ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION

Critical Debate

Should nurses be male or female?

1. Form two groups: One group will make the case that all nurses should be male, the other group that women should be eligible
2. Spend the first 10 minutes brainstorming with your group:
   - The arguments you would like to make
   - Responses to the arguments you think the other group will make
3. Groups will then take turns presenting their arguments and offering rebuttals (20 mins)

Break

Thinking evaluatively about YOUR program

1. Program context
2. Program assumptions

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Context and Assumptions Brainstorm

Context

The physical, social and economic environment in which a program takes place

Women in the community are expected to undertake many household tasks (e.g. child care, cooking meals, etc.)

Assumptions

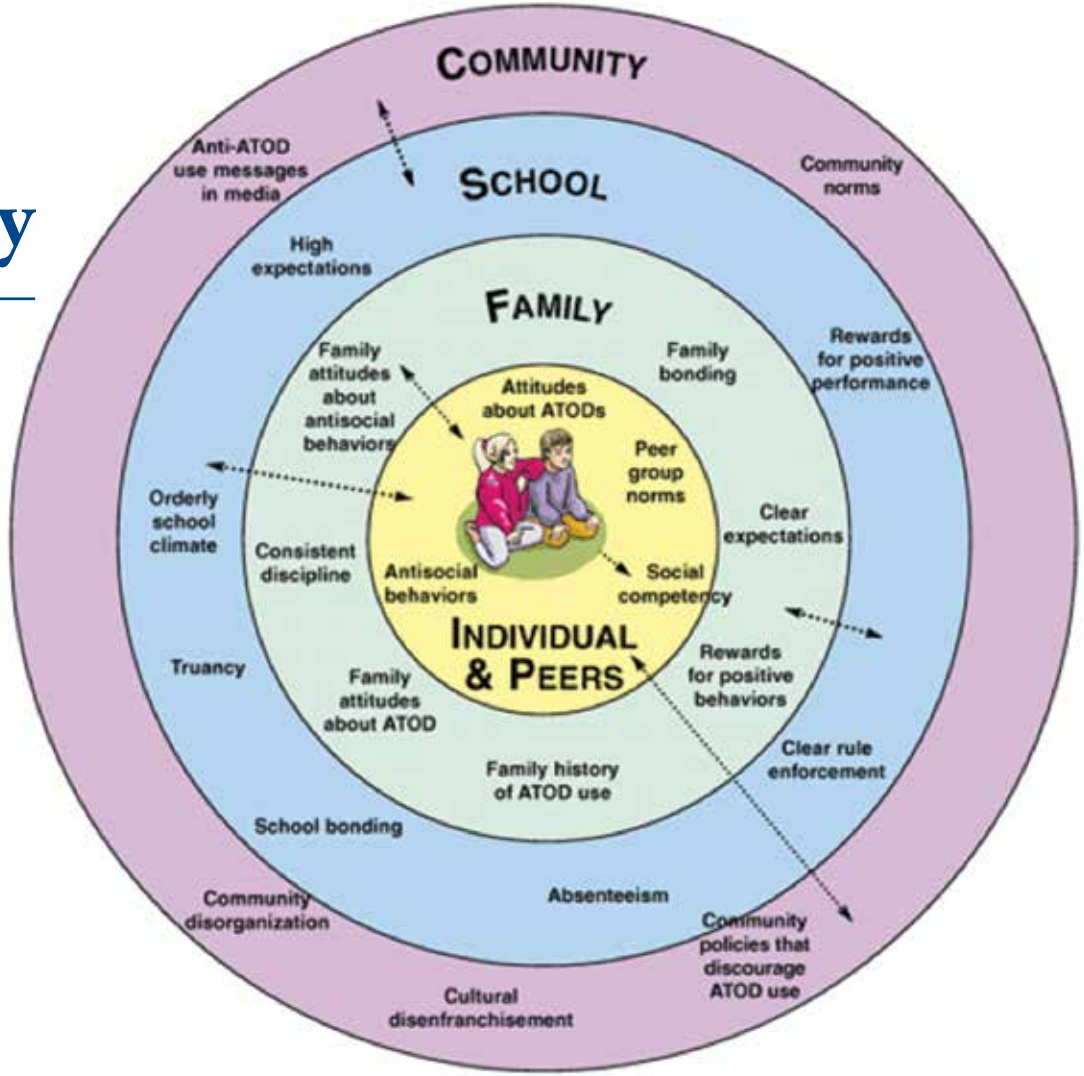
Implicitly or explicitly accepted ideas about how and why a program works

Women in the community will be able to find childcare in order to attend the program

Project context: People-Place-History

How does context affect your ability to implement your program?

What is it about people, place and history that affects (helps or hinders) your program?



Bronfenbrenner, Urie. (1979) *The Ecology of Human Development*. Harvard University Press.

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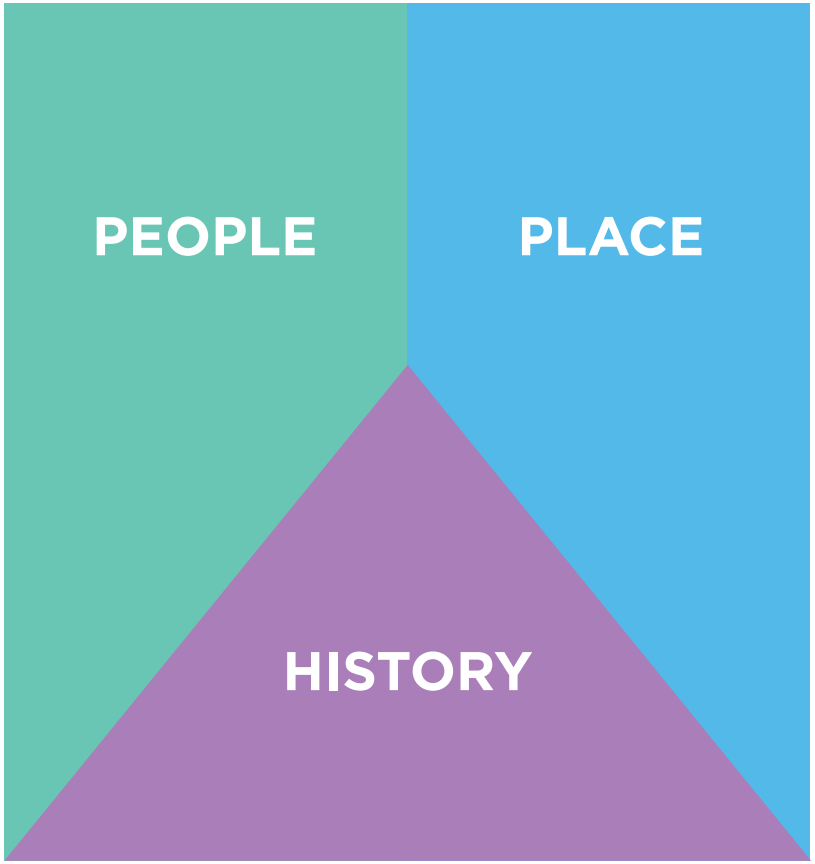
People-Place-History

With your group, brainstorm the key aspects of your program's context (people, place and history). Organize the results of your brainstorm onto chart paper as illustrated on the right.



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Program Assumptions

- Causal
- Prescriptive
- Foundational

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Causal Assumptions

- About how different parts of the world work and about the conditions under which these can be changed.
- How will program outputs turn into intended outcomes? e.g., *If we offer this program, then participants will learn something new.*

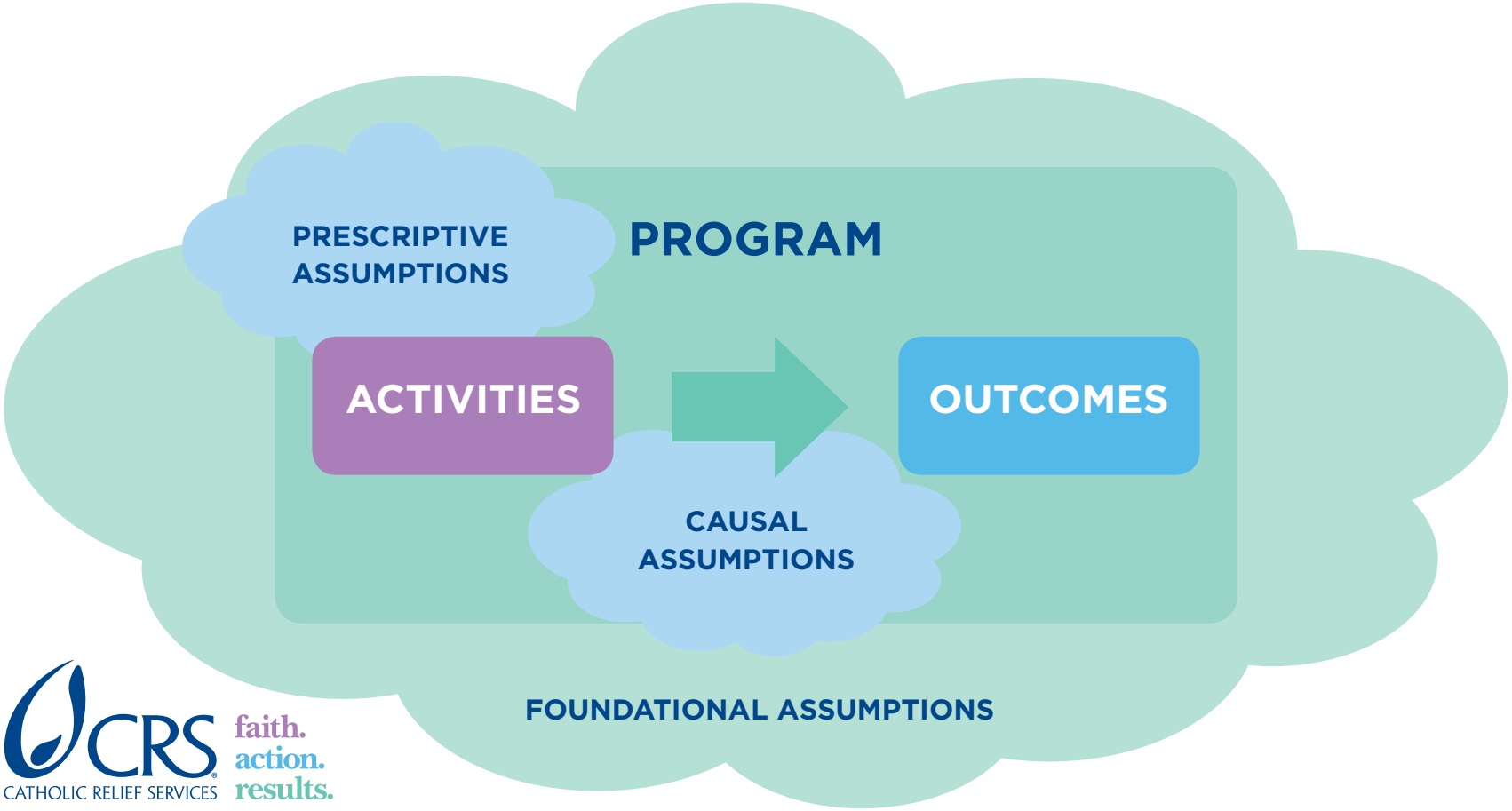
Prescriptive Assumptions

- About what we think ought to or should be happening in a particular situation.
- What is the most appropriate program/policy strategy alternative? e.g., *All projects must have a gender component.*

Foundational Assumptions

- Deeply held beliefs about the world, like a worldview.
- What implicit perspectives or theories of knowledge, and of reality, guide your work? What global geopolitical and cultural trends affect your thinking without you usually being aware of it? e.g., *Scientific knowledge is fundamentally better than indigenous knowledge.*

Program Assumptions



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ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION

Program Assumptions

- Now that you have had some practice identifying assumptions, try focusing on your program or project. Brainstorm as many assumptions (including causal, prescriptive and foundational) as you can.
- Assign one notetaker and record the output of your brainstorm on chart paper.

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Reflection

Thinking about ET:

- How are ET and learning related?
- How would you explain ET to a colleague?

Thinking about today's workshop:

- What did you like about today's workshop?
- How could today's activities better meet the goals set out in the morning?
- What are you still unsure about?
- What are some key "takeaways" for you?

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Handouts from Day 1

- Consent form
- Pre-workshop survey
- Simple scenario
- What is ET?
- The MEAL system
- What does ET sound and look like?
- Identifying assumptions
- [Media article to be critiqued]
- Thinking hats
- Scenario analysis

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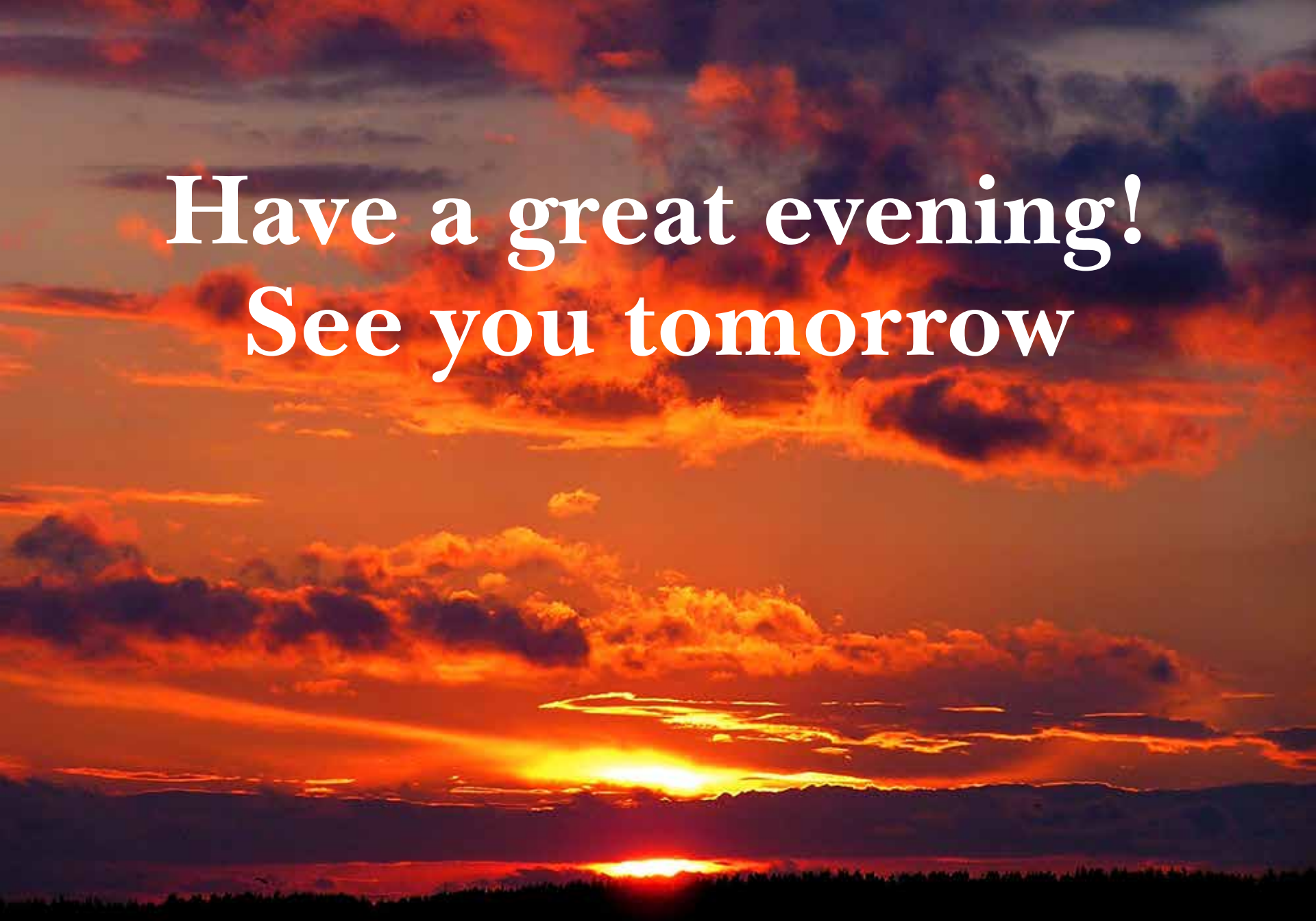
Have a great evening!
See you tomorrow


Good morning!

Feedback from Day 1

Did we achieve our goals?

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Turn and Talk

- What is ET? How would you explain it to a child?
- How are ET and learning related?
- What is an assumption?
- Why are assumptions important to identify?

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Agenda Day 2

Time	Task
8:30am	Debrief of Day 1, Goals for Day 2
9:00am	Program description diagram
10:15am	Break
10:30am	Scenario analysis: Vanilla in Uganda
11:00am	Stakeholder analysis
12:00pm	Lunch
1:00pm	Program mission statement, Introduction to ToC Pathway Models
1:45pm	Developing ToC Pathway Models
3:00pm	Break
3:15pm	Peer review of ToC Pathway Models
4:00pm	Appreciative pause
4:05pm	Model revisions
4:45pm	Reflect and debrief
5:00pm	Close

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Goals for the Day

- Develop pictorial representations of your project
- Learn about stakeholder perspectives
- Understand and develop theories of change (ToC Pathway Models)
- Practice critical peer review

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ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION

Program Description Diagram

- Create an image or diagram that represents your program using no words. This could involve use of metaphors. (20 mins)
- Each group then presents their image to the plenary group. Feedback and reflections welcome! (5 mins each)
- There are two purposes to this:

  1. To foster team communication
  2. To show how an image (and/or model) can communicate nuances about a program that may be hard to describe in words.

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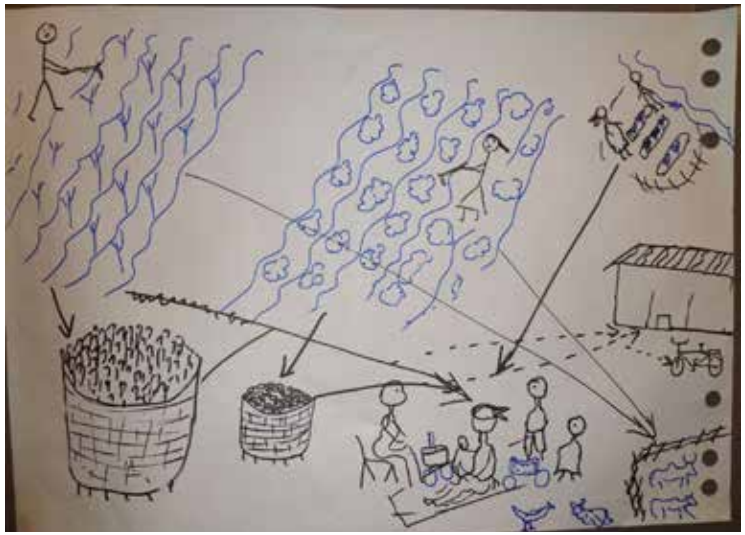

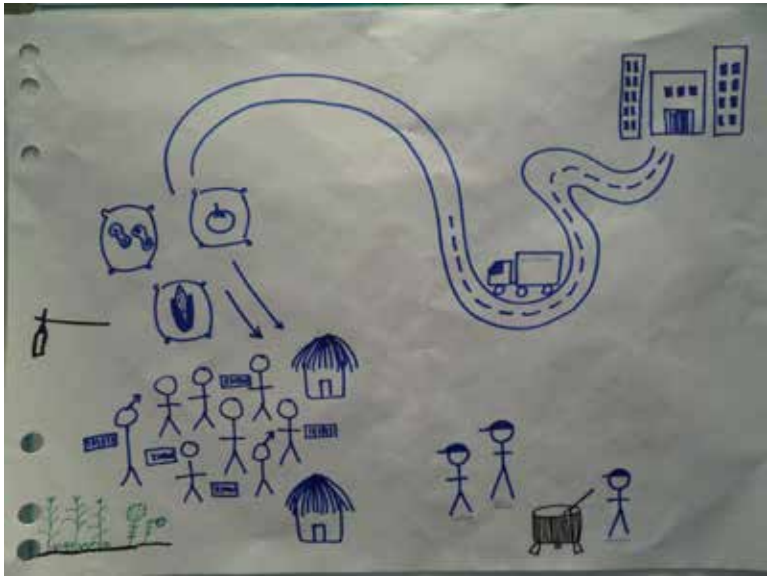

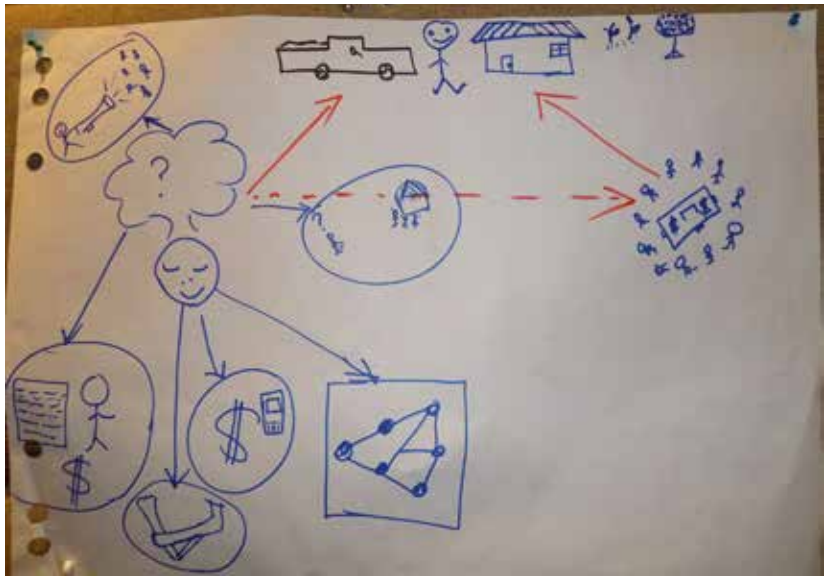

Break

Scenario Analysis: The Case of Vanilla in Uganda

1. Government declares policy to promote cash crops
2. Agricultural scientists suggest vanilla as cash crop
3. Government gives incentives to farmers to plant vanilla
4. Agricultural extension workers train farmers to plant vanilla
5. Farmers given inputs – seed, fertilizer and credit
6. Farmers plant vanilla

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Scenario Analysis: The Case of Vanilla in Uganda

- After two years vanilla output is less than targeted
- After three years the output drops

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Scenario Analysis: The Case of Vanilla in Uganda

- Does it have to do with plant pathology?
- Are the farmers not following instructions?
- Is the extension service poor?
- Did the farmers get their inputs in time and in adequate quantity?

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Scenario Analysis: The Case of Vanilla in Uganda

- No problem was detected with crop management
- Extension services were not optimal but adequate
- Farmers would like more inputs, especially loan subsidies
- Still the output decreased

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Scenario Analysis: The Case of Vanilla in Uganda

USAID then set up an extensive enquiry involving its project staff and its gender specialist. They:

1. **Changed the research question**
   - To look at work, ownership and control of resources
2. **Changed the respondents**
   - Asked both women and men, since they both worked on the crop
3. **Changed the way questions were asked**
   - Asked women and men separately because they had different roles and interests
   - Did not use questionnaires because the women in this case were illiterate
   - Used participatory methods to ensure free and frank discussion

Scenario Analysis: The Case of Vanilla in Uganda

- Vanilla is a very labor-intensive crop. Men own the crop and do the initial planting, but the women of the household provide the labor for the intensive cultivation; no other labour is hired.
- Women had to neglect their subsistence crops to manage the new crop while the men continued to cultivate their other market crops.
- Families were losing their subsistence crops and not getting the benefits of cash crop production. Therefore, the women were sabotaging the crop by nipping the bud at the point of germination.

REFLECTION

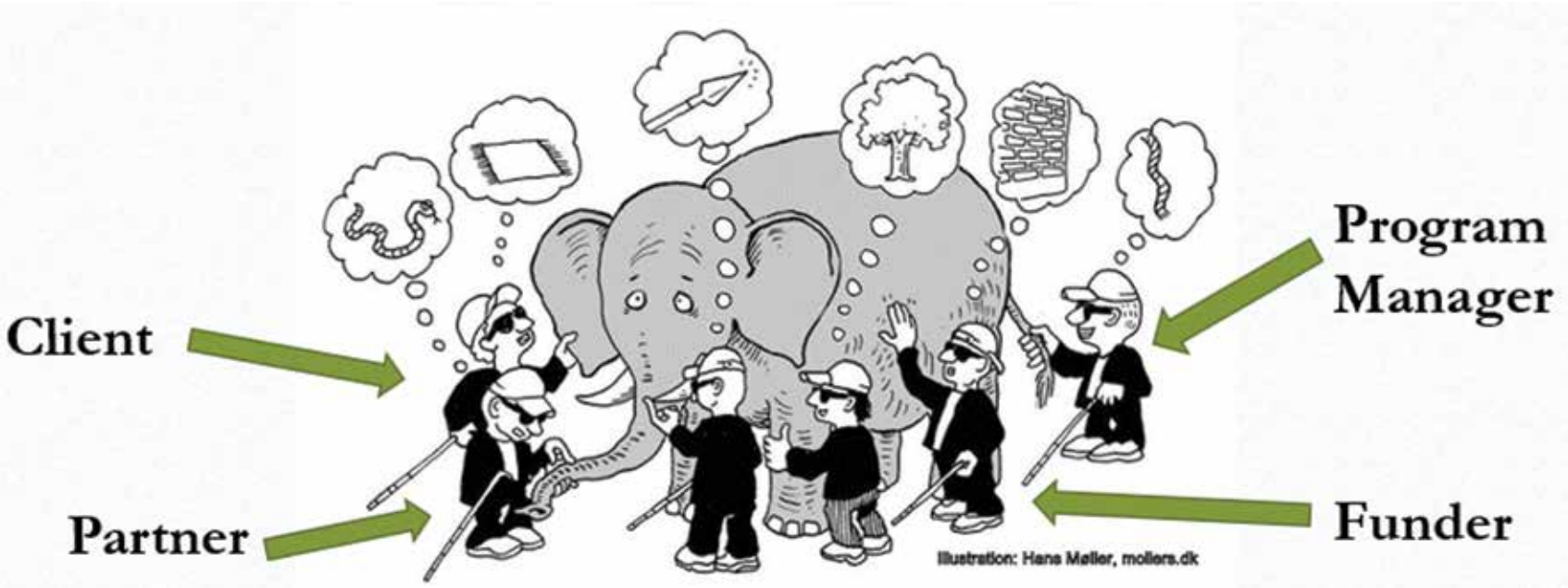
The Case of Vanilla in Uganda

Thinking about this scenario:

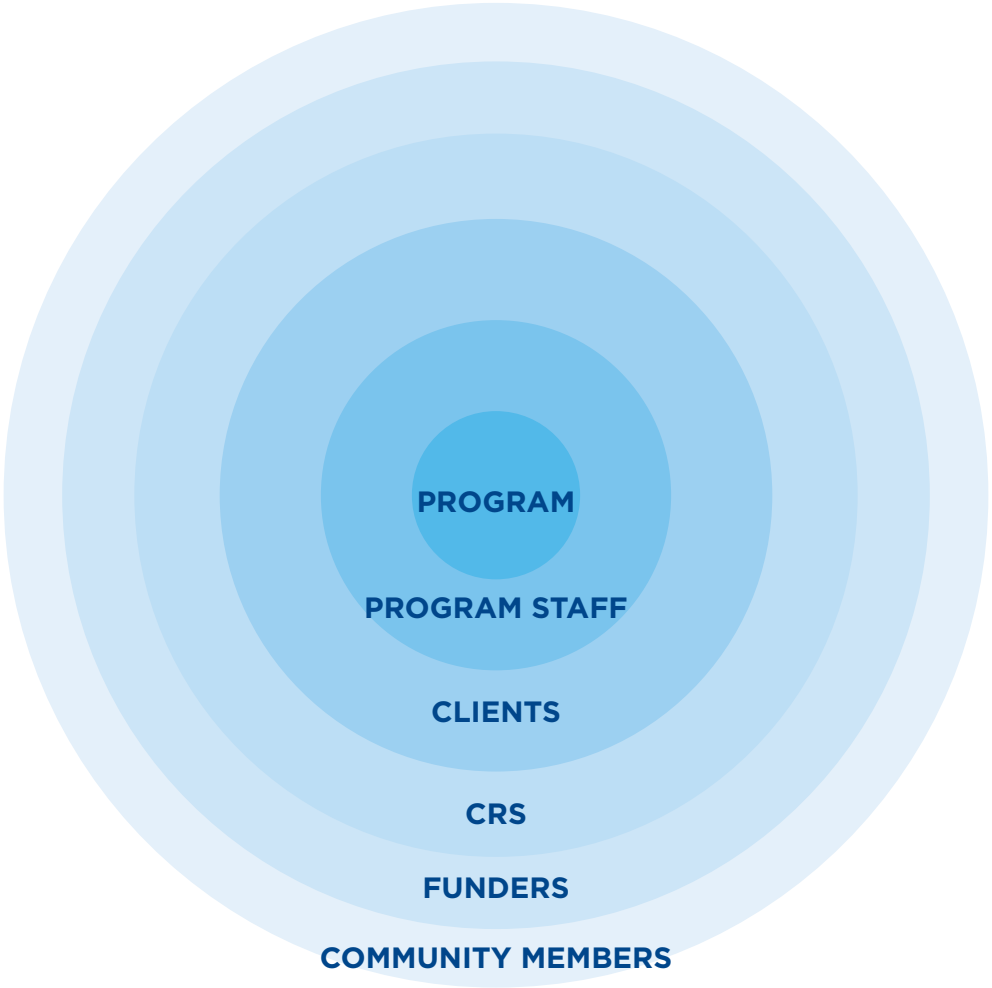
- What assumptions were program planners/funders making?
- Where did they go wrong in their MEAL work? Why?
- How could evaluative thinking have helped? (Be specific; who should have been using ET and when?)

Work in pairs to discuss these questions (20 mins), followed by a quick share-out (10 mins)

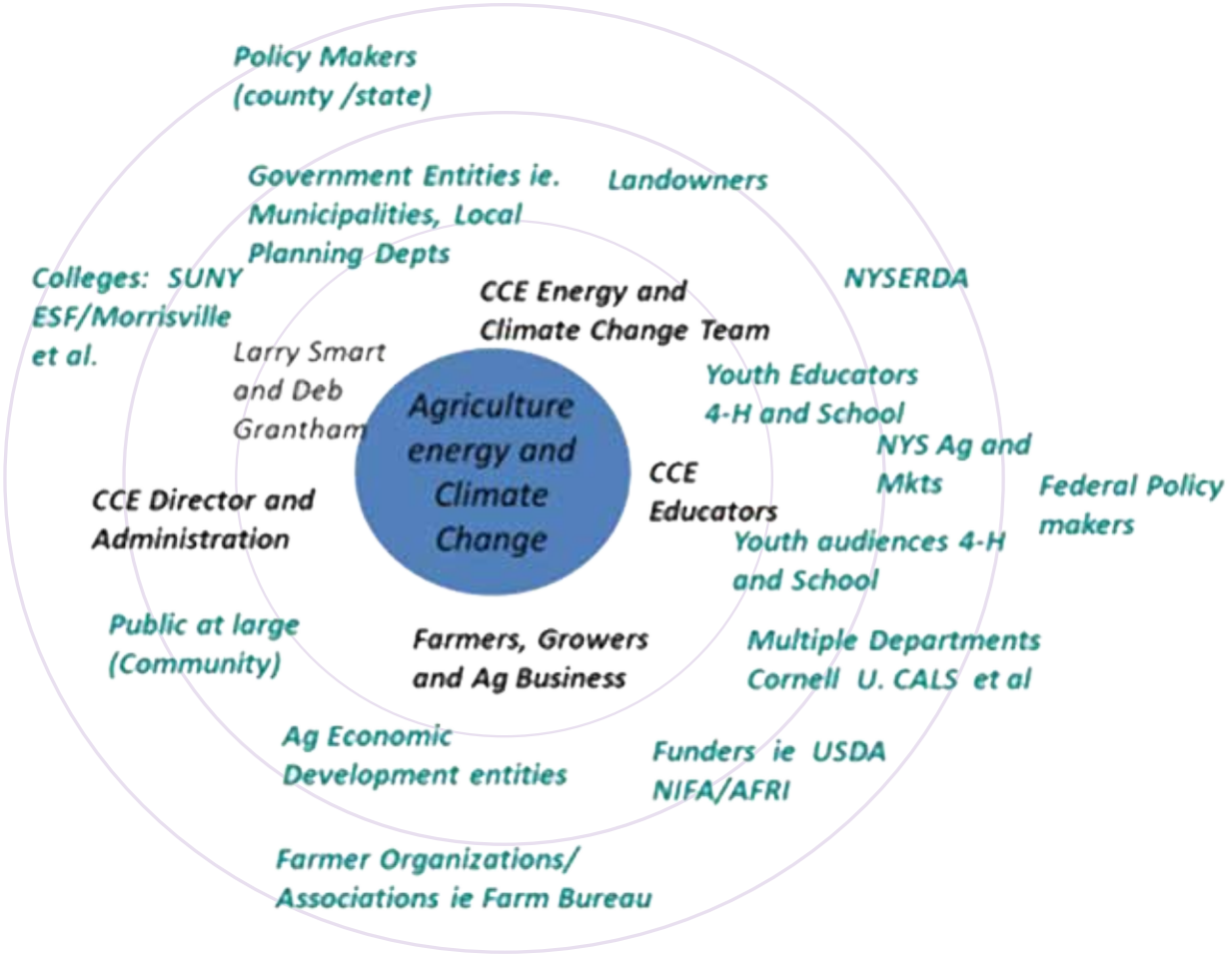
Stakeholder Analysis



Stakeholder Analysis



Stakeholder Analysis



Who are these community members?

In pairs,
come up with as many different
sub-groups as possible for the
broader group defined as
“community members”.

ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION

HANDOUT

Stakeholder Analysis

- Brainstorm stakeholders. Create a stakeholder map for your program

See handout: *Stakeholder Analysis Template*

ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION

HANDOUT

Stakeholder Analysis

See handout: *Stakeholder Analysis*

DISCUSSION

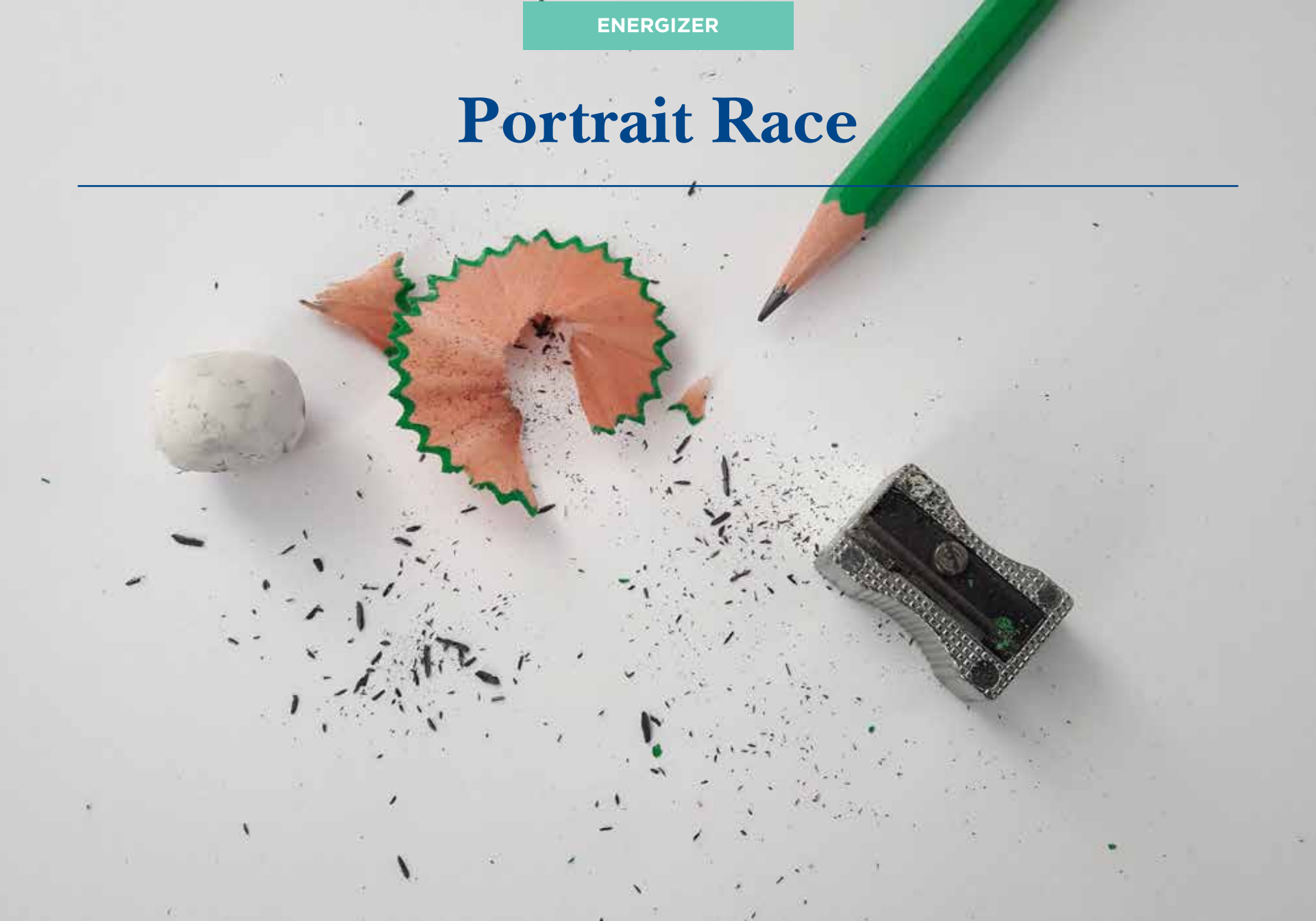
Stakeholder Perspectives

- What came up in the discussion with your group as you did this activity?
- How might doing a stakeholder brainstorm/map contribute to evaluative thinking?
- What other uses do you see for a stakeholder brainstorm/map?

Lunch

ENERGIZER

Portrait Race



ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION

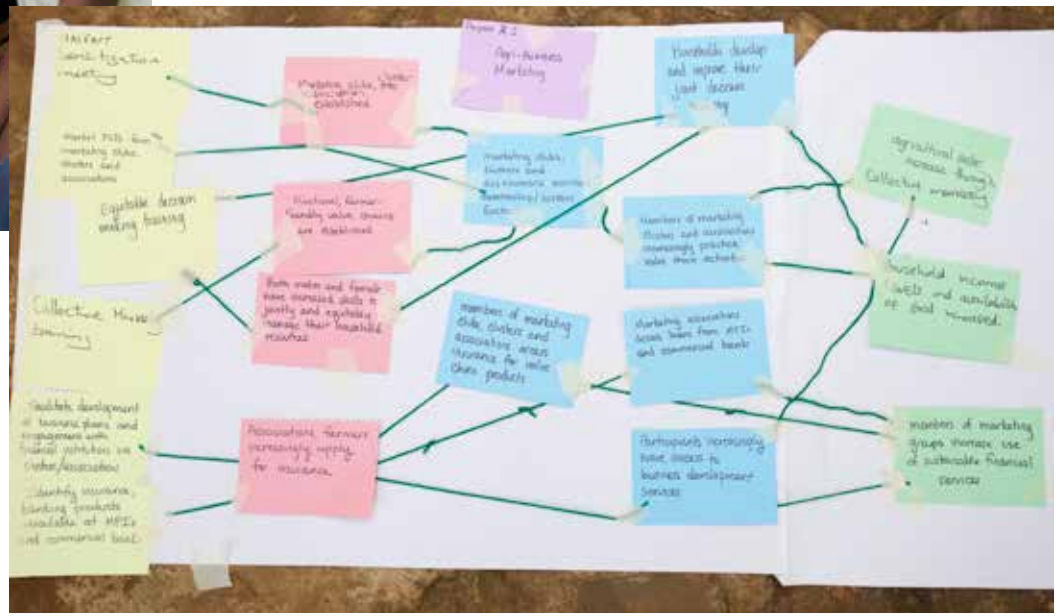
Program Mission Statement

Before you start building your model … Clarify and make explicit what the overall purpose of your program is?

- Take 5 minutes to compose one sentence that summarizes the purpose of your program
- Turn and talk to a neighbor in your program group. How are your sentences the same? How are they different? What explains these differences? How will you represent these differences in the model?

Consider these ideas as you look at your strategic objectives…

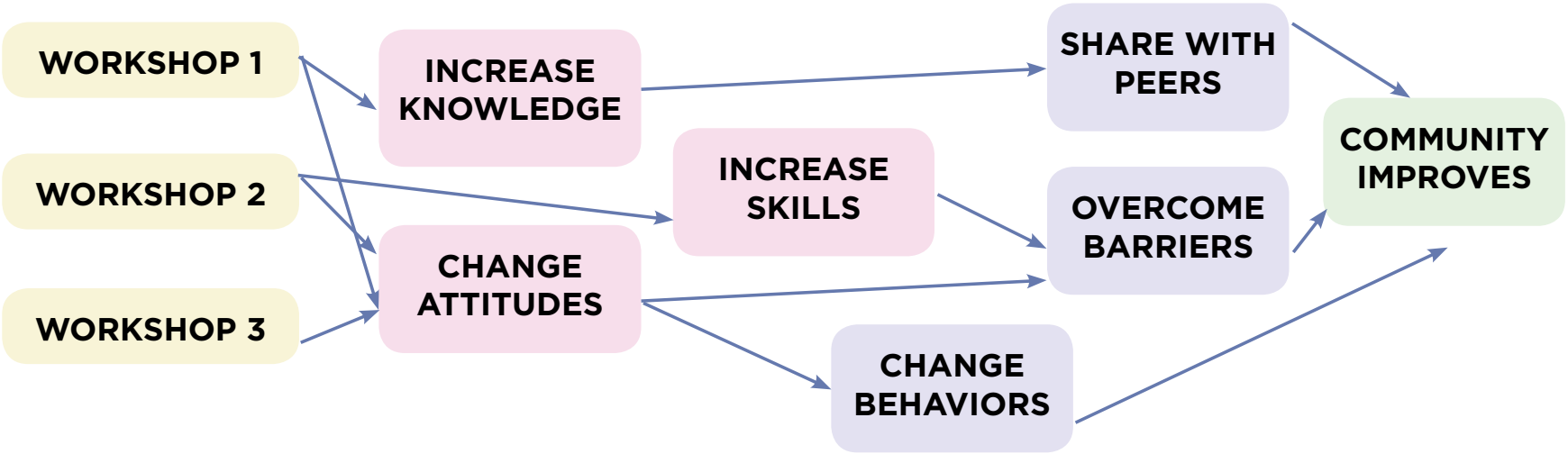
Theory of Change Pathway Models



Theory of Change Pathway Models

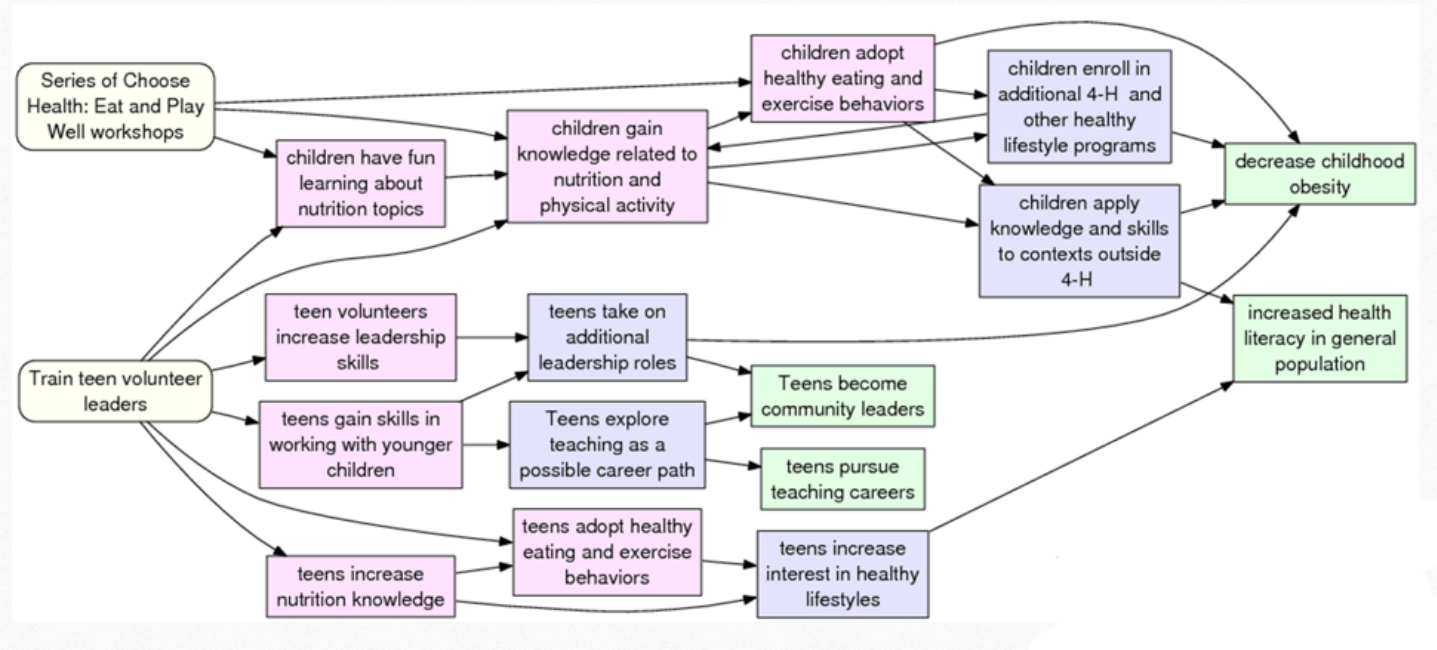
- Tell the story of your program
- Capture complexity
- Follow a believable sequence
- Are used for planning and MEAL
- Have an evaluative thinking process use

Theory of Change Pathway Model



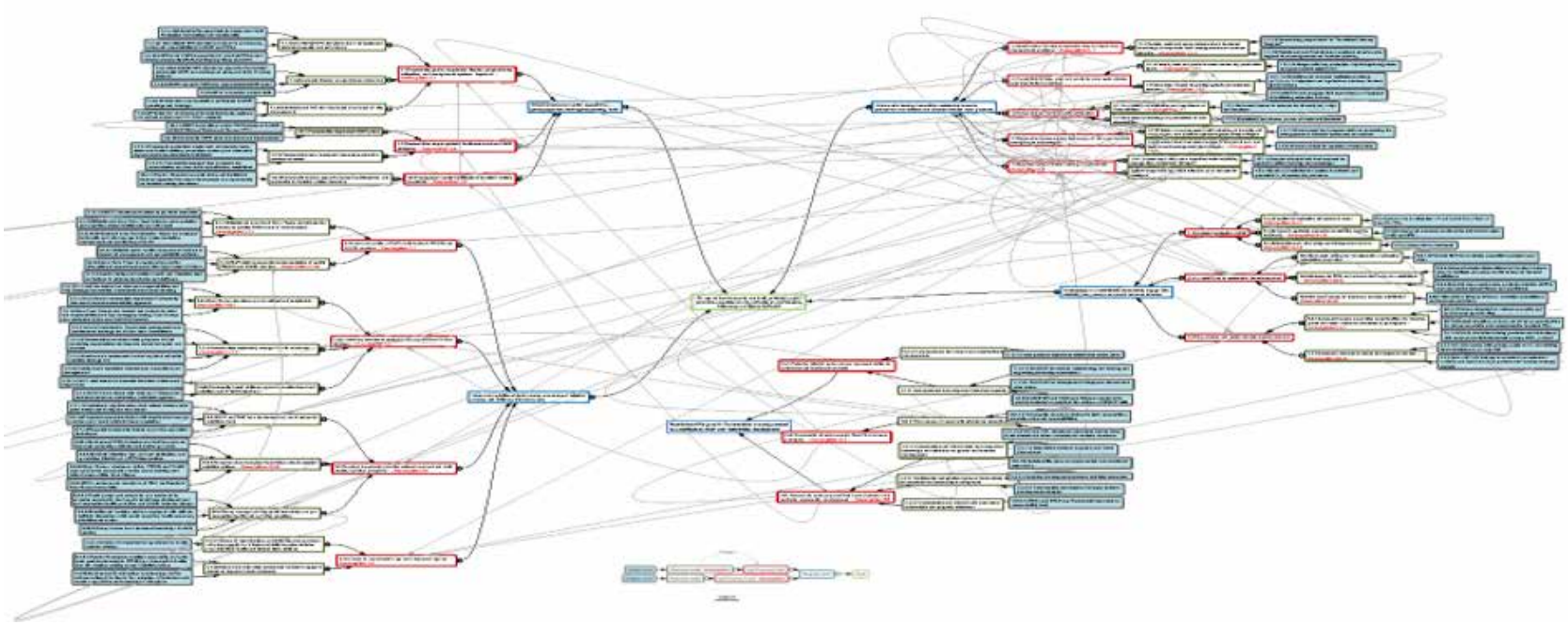
Theory of Change Pathway Model

Some interventions are not especially complicated …



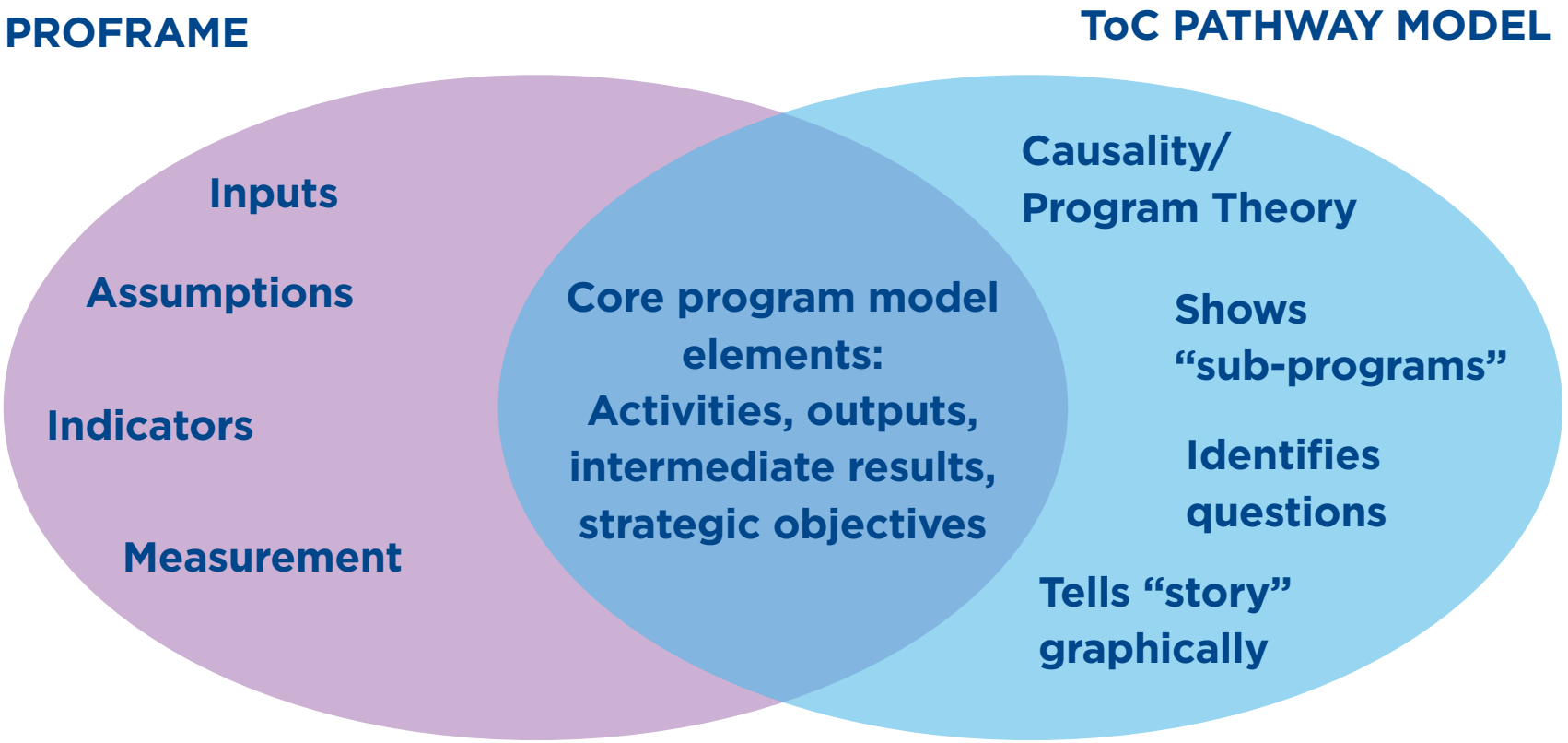
Theory of Change Pathway Model

… but some are more complicated!



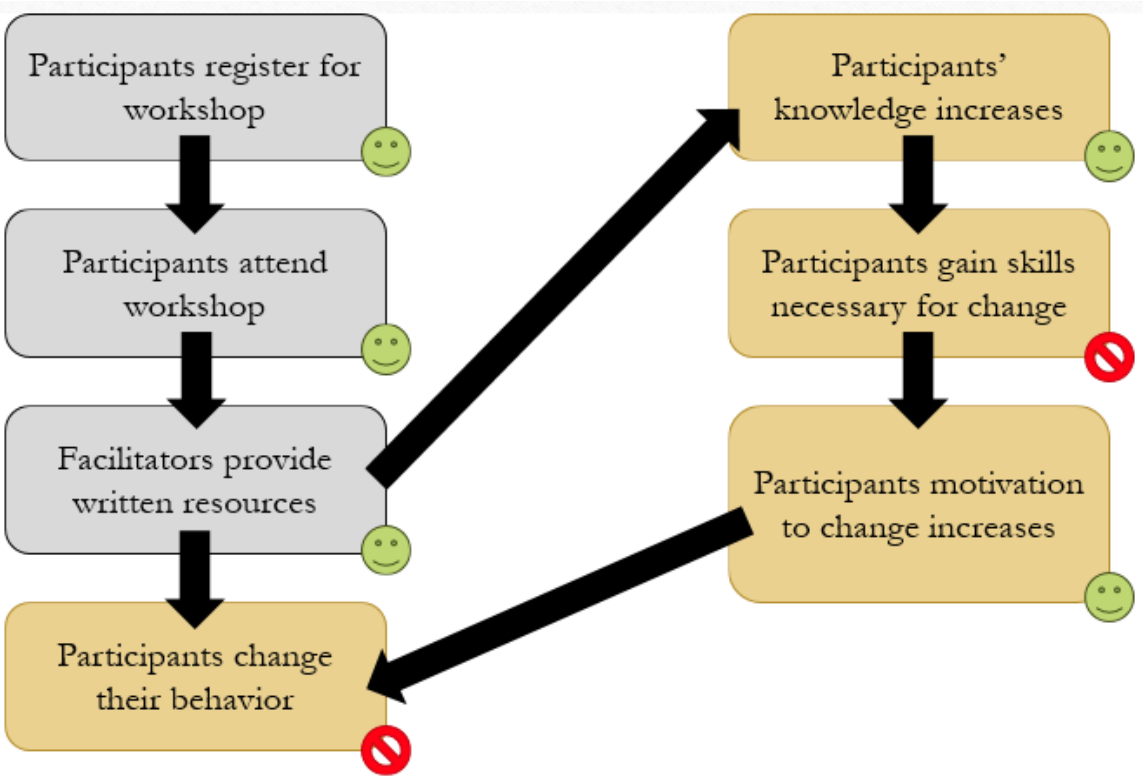
Theory of Change – UBALE Project, Malawi

How ToC Pathway Model and Proframe relate



Theory of Change Pathway Models

Understanding what is *really* is going on!



HANDOUT

Notes for developing ToC Pathway Models

There may be …

- More than one arrow coming FROM an Activity or Output/IR/SO
- More than one arrow going INTO an Output/IR/SO
- Arrows AMONG Output/IR/SOs in a column (Outputs leading to other Outputs, IRs to IRs, etc.)
- Arrows in both directions between two Outputs/IRs/SOs.

There should NOT be …

- An Output/IR/SO with no arrow leading to it
- An Activity with no arrows leading from it

Notes for developing ToC Pathway Models

- Are there any Activities that are not connected to any Outputs/IRs/SOs?
- Are there any Outputs/IRs/SOs that are not connected to any Activities?
- If yes, why do these gaps exist? Was something simply left out of the model, or is there a program Activity that does not really address the program goals?
- Is the program expected to lead to a particular Output/IR/SO, but does not actually include an Activity that would result in that Output/IR/SO?

ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION

Developing ToC Pathway Models

Arrange your cards/add links

Using your ToC Pathway Model to 'tell the story'

Assembling your ToC Pathway Model:

- We have created a set of index cards for you based on your existing program's Proframe
- You will need to:
    - Add links
    - Add cards
    - Remove or revise cards (use the back if you can)
    - Change the color (category) of a card
- Outputs/short-term outcomes seem to be missing. When brainstorming these, think about knowledge, skills and attitudes

Break

ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION

HANDOUT

ToC Pathway Model Review

See handout:

ToC Pathway Model Review Guidance

ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION

Appreciative Pause

Consider and identify:

- A comment that opened up a whole new line of thinking.
- A comment that helped identify an assumption.
- A comment that identified a gap in reasoning that needed to be addressed.
- A new idea that was intriguing and had not been considered before.
- A comment showing the connection between two other ideas or contributions when that connection hadn't been clear.

ToC Pathway Model Revision Time

Nodes:

- Are these the correct Activities, Outputs, IRs and SOs?
- What is missing?
- What needs to be removed?

Links:

- Are the links logical?
- Are there missing links?
- Are there redundant or low-priority links that need to be removed?

REFLECTION

ToC Pathway Models

Consider the following question with your neighbors:

- How do ToC Pathway Models contribute to/improve program planning?
- How do ToC Pathway Models contribute to MEAL?
- How useful is it for you to understand the ToC Pathway Model for your program?

Handouts from Day 2

- Stakeholder analysis template
- Stakeholder analysis
- ToC Pathway Models
- Notes for developing ToC Pathway Models
- ToC Pathway Model review guidance

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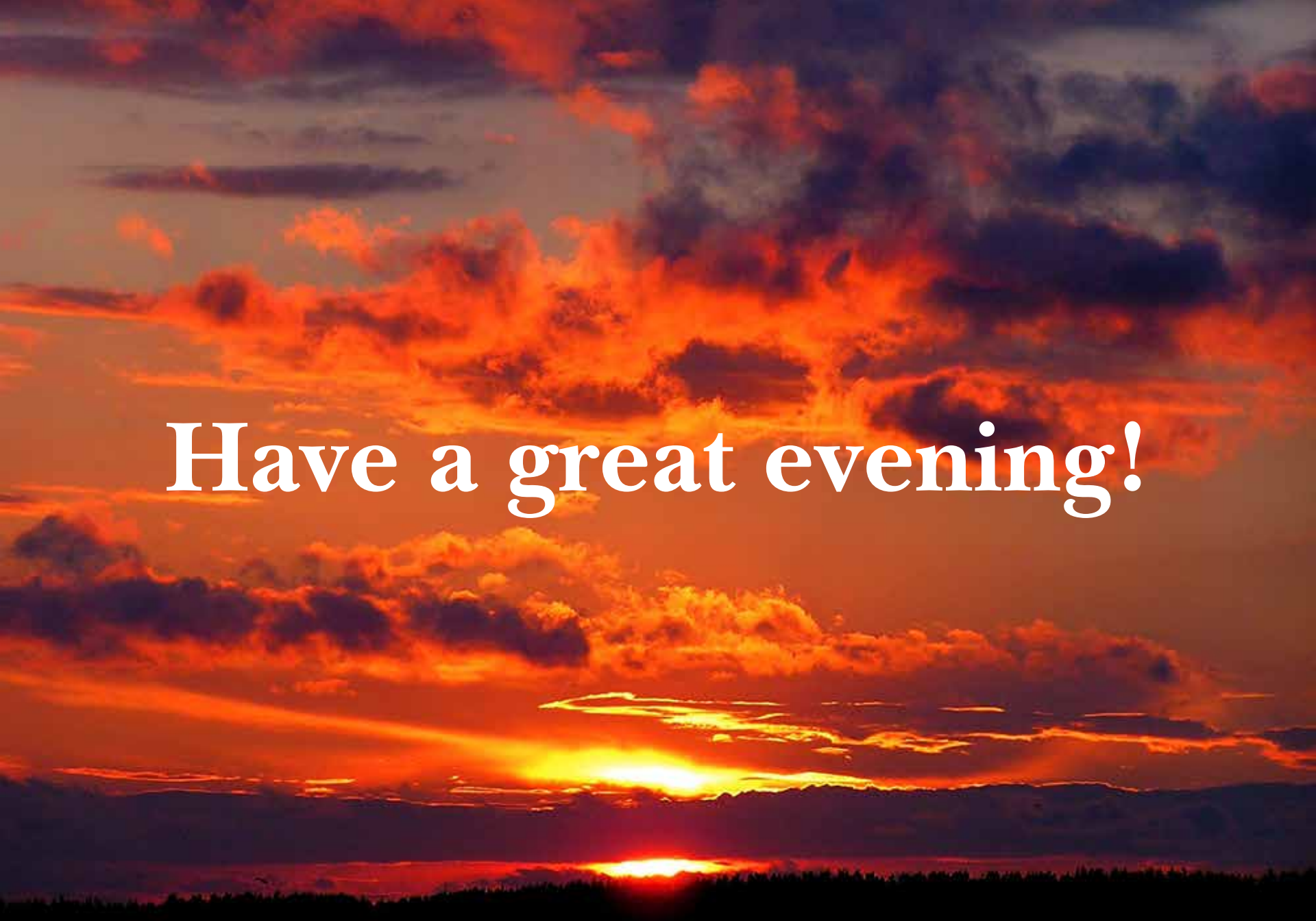
faith.
action.
results.


Have a great evening!


Good morning!

Feedback from Day 2

Did we achieve our goals?

Turn and Talk

- How would you explain a ToC Pathway Model to a child?
- When might you use Thinking Hats?
- When would you not use evaluative thinking?

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Agenda Day 3

Time	Task
8:30am	Debrief of Days 1 and 2, Goals for Day 3
9:00am	Program learning diagram
9:50am	Field staff as reflective practitioners
10:15am	Break
10:30am	Posing questions, taking action
12:00pm	Lunch
1:00pm	Brainstorm barriers to ET and how to overcome them
1:30pm	ET conversations with stakeholders
2:00pm	Break
2:15pm	World café: Being an ET champion
3:00pm	Learning-to-action plan
3:30pm	Organize notebook, post-workshop survey
4:30pm	Close

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Goals for the Day

- Consider how knowledge is gained, managed and used in your context
- Brainstorm barriers to ET and how to overcome them
- Practice talking with stakeholders about the importance of ET
- Develop plans for establishing ET in your context

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The Perfect Plan (or not)

- The enemy of a good plan is the dream of a perfect plan.
- Projects are managed in the realm of uncertainty; three quarters of the factors on which action in projects is based are wrapped in a fog of greater or lesser uncertainty. A sensitive and discriminating judgment is called for; a skilled intelligence to scent out the truth.

Adapted from Carl von Clausewitz,
Prussian general and military theorist, 19th Century

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ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION

HANDOUT

Program Learning Diagram

- Create an image or diagram that represents how learning and program development are related for your project.
- Consider:
  - Sources of learning
  - Knowledge use
  - Decision-making mechanisms
  - Feedback loops (or lack thereof)
  - Program evolution

Program Learning Diagram

- Next: Map ET onto your existing diagram

1. Where is ET already taking place?
2. Where is ET needed but does not already exist?

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PRESENT + DISCUSS

Program Learning Diagrams

- One representative from each group will present (describe) their diagram to the larger group, including:
  1. The strengths and weaknesses of their program's learning cycle
  2. The one area of improvement they would prioritize
- Members of the "audience" will offer:
  1. Thoughtful compliments
  2. Reflections on what this diagram made them think about their own diagram

Field staff as reflective practitioners

"It is not until front-line workers' questions are at the center of the discussion that it becomes possible to deliberate on such ideas as data-driven decisions and even evidence-based practices."

Kim Sabo-Flores

Co-Founder and Chief of Products and Services, Algorhythm

Field staff as reflective practitioners

- Are on the frontline of implementing MEAL and program improvements
- Know the most about the program and its beneficiaries
- Are best equipped to identify assumptions about the program and to pose thoughtful questions about the program and how it works

Have the least time and resources available for MEAL

What does it mean to be a reflective practitioner?

A reflective practitioner is an evaluative thinker.
We:

- Critically observe
- Pose questions
- Identify assumptions
- Seek evidence
- Posit plausible alternative explanations
- Consider alternative plans

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Break

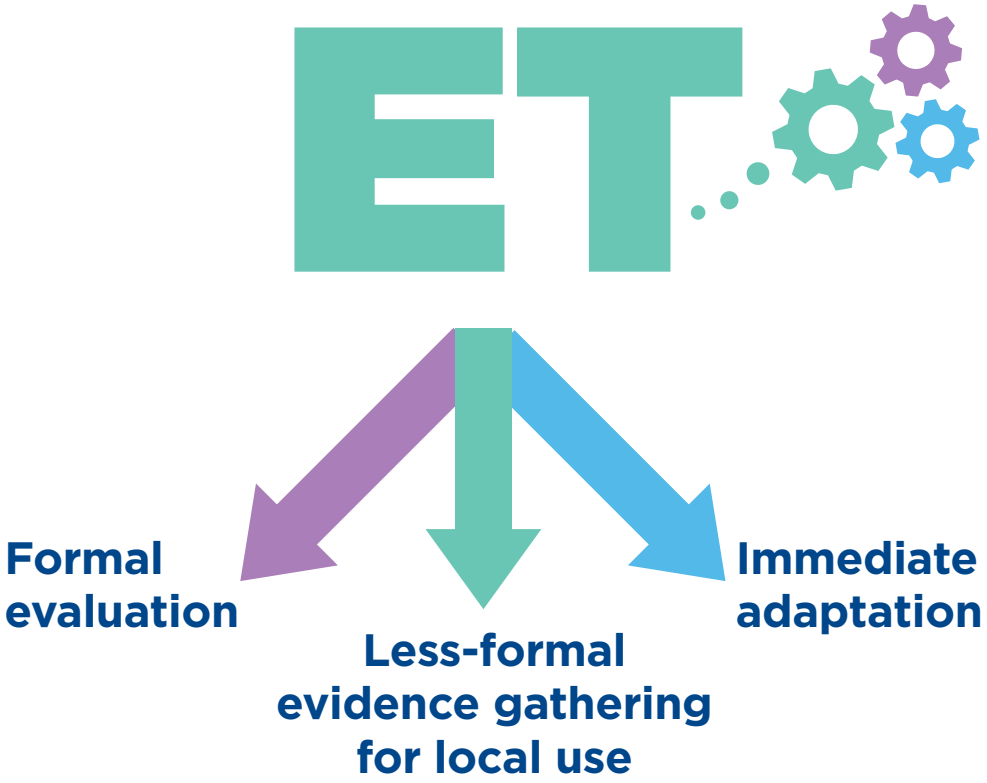
Putting Evaluative Thinking to use

This diagram shows the key ways in which monitoring and evaluation (M&E) and accountability and learning (A&L) work together in a MEAL system.

How do we use the "results" of our ET? (Assumptions we found, questions we posed, reflections we had?)

Putting Evaluative Thinking to use

- Where do field-based staff fit in?
- What changes can they more easily influence?



Putting Evaluative Thinking to use

Sometimes learning questions are answered in final reports. Some evaluative judgements flow from analyzing and discussing data without producing a final report; indeed, increasingly, findings emerge as "the real time production of streams of evaluative knowledge".

(Patton, 2009; Rist, 2006a:6-7; Stame 2006b:vii)

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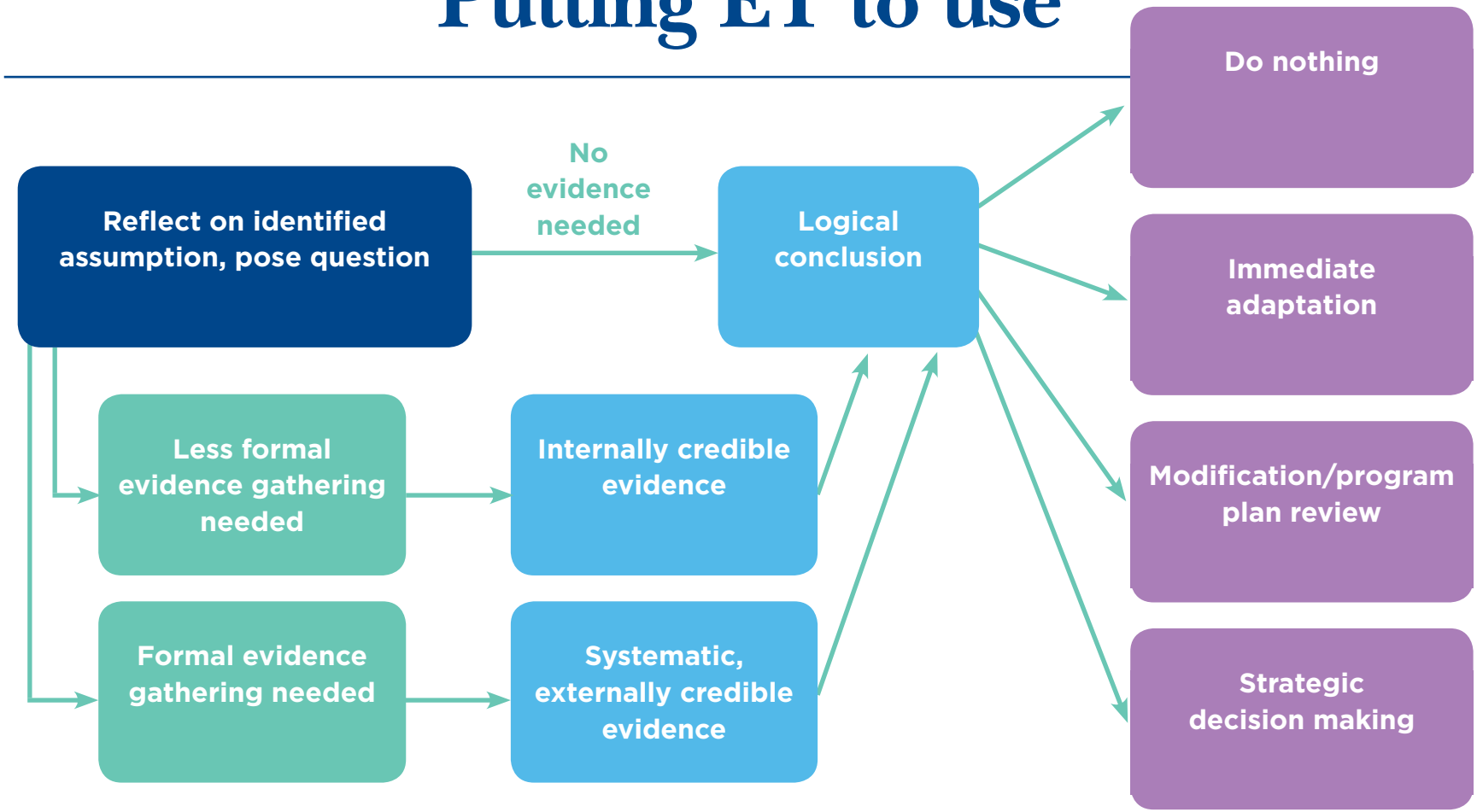
Working with Questions: Putting ET to use



Considerations for sorting assumptions

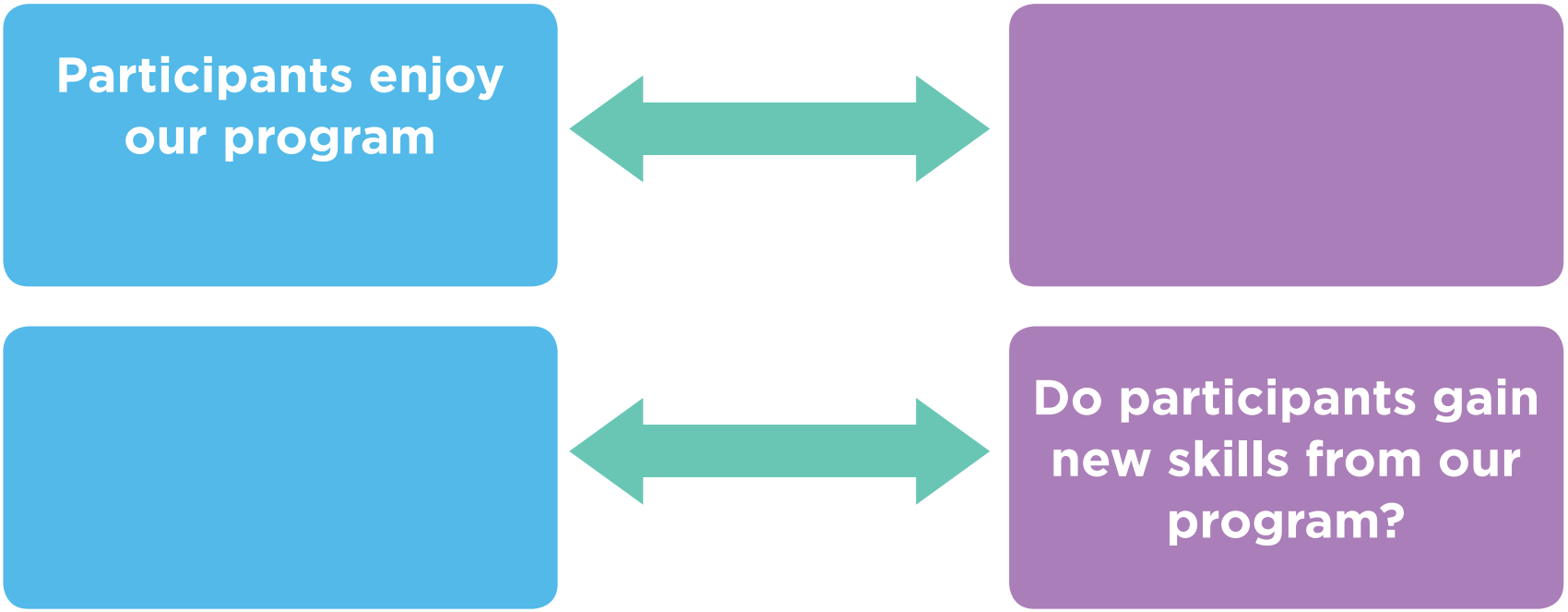
- What is already known about the program, its participants and/or its context?
- What kind of evidence would be credible, and to whom, in answering each question?
- What resources are currently available?
- What sources of evidence are available and to whom?

ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION

HANDOUT

Developing learning questions

Assumptions *and* Questions



Questions *and* Claims

Do participants enjoy our program?	⟷	Participants enjoy our program
Do participants gain new skills from our program?	⟷	Participants gain new skills from our program.

HANDOUT

Questions *and* Claims

See Handout:
Developing learning questions

ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION

HANDOUT

Question Sort

No evidence needed at this time / Safe assumption	Less formal evidence gathering / Easy to check	Formal evidence gathering / I need to look for evidence
Will the store have healthy food?	Do I have money in my wallet?	Is buying healthy food a good idea?
Can participants access the program?	Is the way the material is presented meaningful to participants?	Does participating in the program contribute to a change in behavior?
Would a change in behavior be beneficial to participants?	Are potential participants choosing to participate in the program?	Are participants who are engaged and motivated to participate also motivated to change their behavior?

Learning-to-Action Discussion

- What is your current role in the MEAL/program learning system?
- What influence do you have over program learning and planning?
- What would you like your role to be?

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ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION

HANDOUT

MEAL Memo

1. Pretend you are now in charge of all MEAL work for your project
2. Write a memo that outlines what you would like to be done regarding MEAL
   - What questions would you like to see addressed?
   - What type(s) of evidence would you like to see?
   - How will results be used?
   - Who should do all of this? When?

Lunch

Follow the Leader

Barriers to ET

1. In plenary, ask participants to brainstorm possible barriers to evaluative thinking – one barrier per index card.
2. Post participants' responses on the wall; this can be done by inviting one idea at a time.
3. Invite participants to group the individual ideas into themes.
4. Assign each small group a theme(s) depending on the number of themes that have surfaced.
5. Ask each group to identify at least three possible strategies for overcoming the barrier theme(s) they have been assigned.
6. In plenary, invite each group to present the results of their discussion.

ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION

ET conversations with stakeholders

1. Draw a stakeholder card. This is the stakeholder you will pretend to be
2. Find a partner (someone outside your group)
3. Role play a discussion with your partner:
   - What is ET?
   - Is it important? Why?
   - How should it be practiced?

ET conversations with stakeholders

1. Is it difficult to describe ET? Why?
2. Why might it be important to talk to stakeholders about evaluative thinking/reflective practice?

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Break

HANDOUT

World Café

1. What does it mean to be a champion of ET?
2. What are the top three practical suggestions you would make, and to whom in particular, for improving the culture of ET in the CRS Malawi/ UBALE Project?
3. What are some strategies for talking with (colleagues, beneficiaries, supervisors, funders, etc.) about ET, MEAL and learning?

World Café

See handouts

Principles for Promoting ET

ET Strategies and Activities

Learning to think evaluatively

- Anyone can do it, but it is not trivial and requires practice
- Enable practice with a checklist that prompts ET anywhere and everywhere
- Requires a “safe space” for questioning, identifying assumptions, making suggestions
- Start with small changes and ramp up (one cannot change the culture of a program or organization overnight) e.g. discuss ET experiences in team meetings
- Don’t be shy to try it alongside peers and colleagues. No ideas are wrong; some may just turn out to be better than others

HANDOUT

Learning-to-Action Plan

- How does what we are doing connect to our goals?
- What assumptions are we making?
- How do we know this is working?

Handouts from Day 3

- Program learning diagram
- Developing learning questions
- Question sort
- MEAL memo
- Principles for promoting ET
- ET strategies and activities
- Learning-to-action plan
- Post-workshop survey

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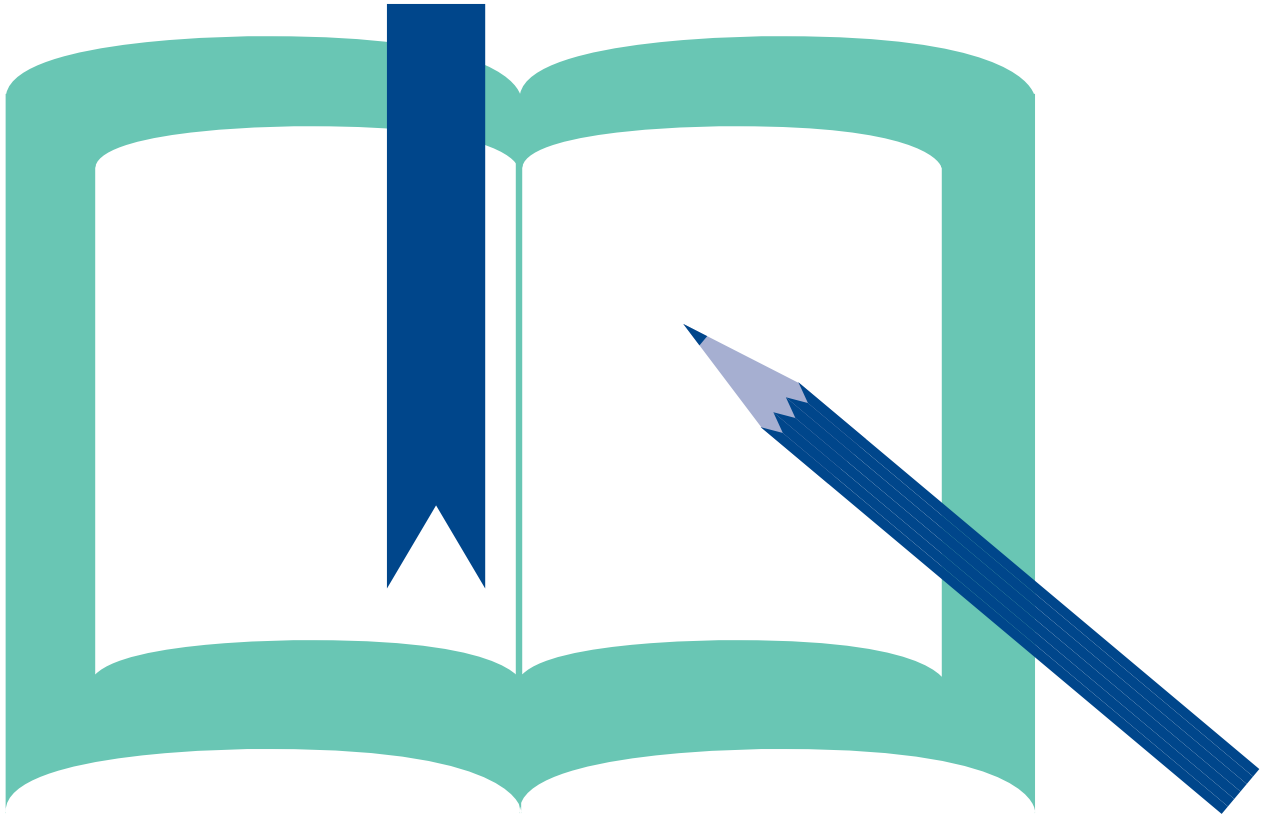
Organizing your ET notebook



Organizing your ET notebook

Day 1 Handouts	Day 2 Handouts	Day 3 Handouts
Consent form	Stakeholder analysis	Program learning diagram
Pre-workshop survey	Stakeholder analysis template	Posing learning questions
Simple scenario	ToC Pathway Models	Question sort
What is ET?	Notes for developing ToC PMs	MEAL memo
The MEAL system	ToC PM review guidance	Principles for promoting ET
What does ET sound and look like?		ET strategies and activities
Identifying assumptions		Learning-to-action plan
[Media article to be critiqued]		Post-workshop survey
Scenario analysis		

HANDOUT

Post-Workshop Survey

- Please fill out the Post-Workshop Survey


Thank you!

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