Evaluative Thinking

Seeking Evidence

ET WORKSHOP

ROUND 2 • GROUP 1

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Introductions

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Introductions

Please share:

- Your name
- Your job title
- Your project(s)/area of work
- What you love most about where you live?

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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
- Posing thoughtful learning questions
- Components of a learning plan
- Learning plan alignment

ROUND 3

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

Your Workshop Goals

What would YOU like to get out of this workshop?

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

1. Jot down a couple of ideas for yourself.
2. Share: As we go around the room, select one goal to share that has not been shared by someone else.

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Workshop Goals

You will…

1. Reflect and build on ET work so far
2. Learn how to use ET to develop a project learning plan
3. Learn about ET and evaluation use
4. Identify barriers to ET and brainstorm strategies for overcoming these barriers
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…

- A *draft* Learning Agenda for your project in line with the MEAL policies and procedures (8.2)
- A plan for completing/finalizing your plan

We will leave this workshop with…

- Experiences and feedback from you on how we can improve our ET workshop structure, content and delivery

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A little housekeeping…

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

Feel free to ask questions at any time!

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Agenda Day 1

Time	Task
9:00am	Introductions and goals, consent form, pre-workshop survey
9:15am	ET review and activity report
10:30am	Break
10:45am	Revisiting the ToC Pathway Models
12:30pm	Lunch
1.30pm	Revisit and revise assumptions
2:30pm	Break
2:45pm	Introduction to Mining the Model
4:00pm	Reflect and debrief
4:30pm	Close

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HANDOUT

What is Evaluative Thinking?

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What is Evaluative Thinking?

"***Evaluative thinking is a way of doing business.*** This distinction is critical. It derives from studies of evaluation use. Evaluation [or MEAL] is more useful—and actually used—when the program and organizational culture manifests evaluative thinking"

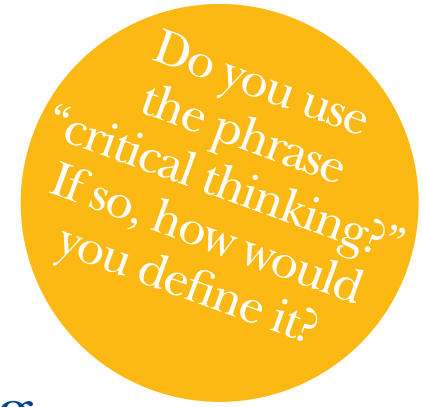
Michael Quinn Patton
Preface to 2014 InterAction Report,
Embracing Evaluative Thinking for Better Outcomes:
Four NGO Case Studies

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 questions
3. Pursuing deeper understanding through reflection and multiple perspective taking
4. Making informed decisions in preparation for action

(BUCKLEY, ARCHIBALD, HARGRAVES & TROCHIM, 2015)



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

What does Evaluative Thinking sound and look like?

Photo by CRS staff

Evaluative Thinking:

What it sounds and looks like in a program work context

Things you may hear:

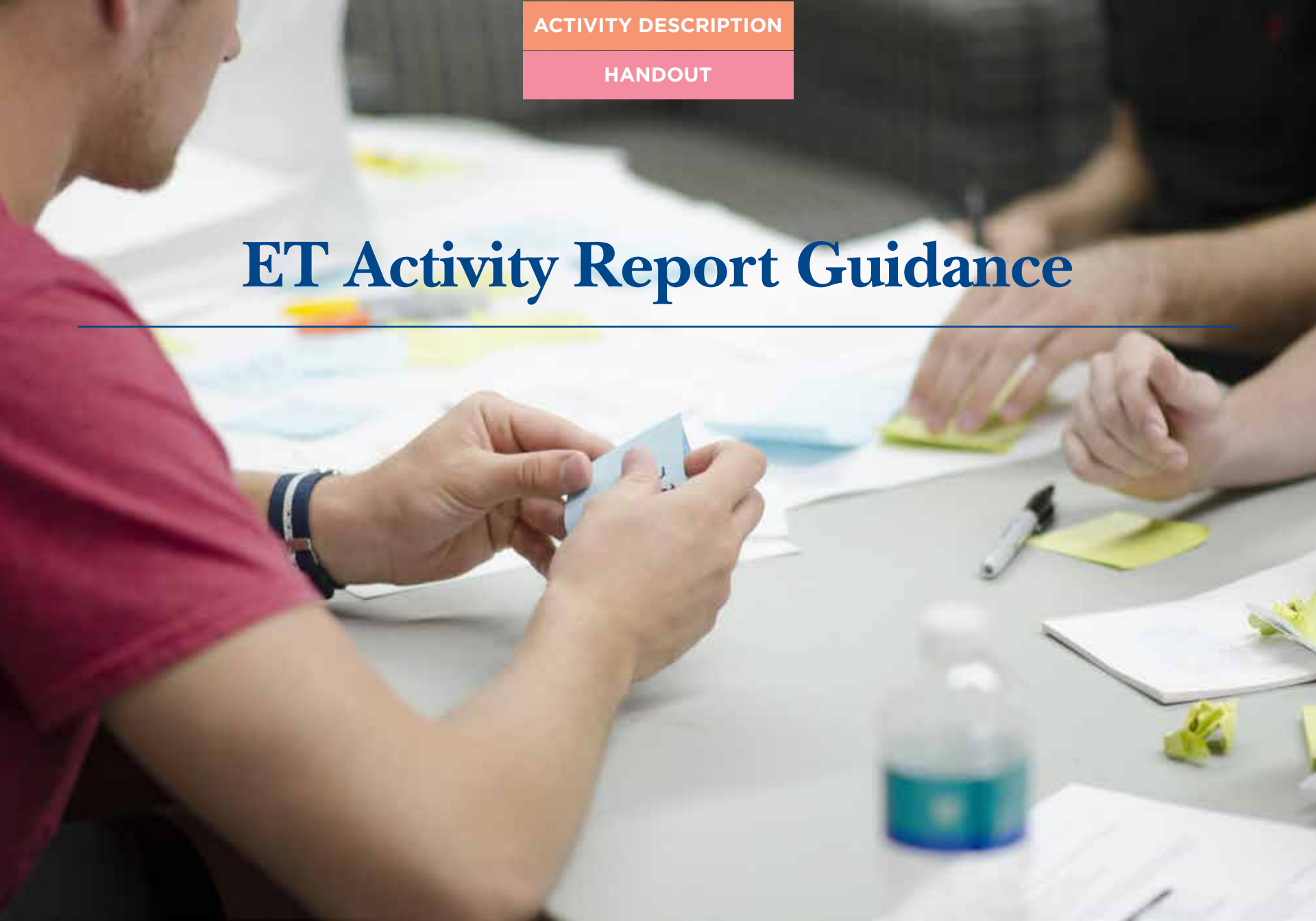
- Why are we assuming X?
- How do we know X?
- What evidence do we have for X?
- What is the thinking behind the way we do X?
- How could we do X better?
- How does X connect to our intended outcomes?
- "Different community members perspectives on this are X, Y, and Z..."

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

ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION

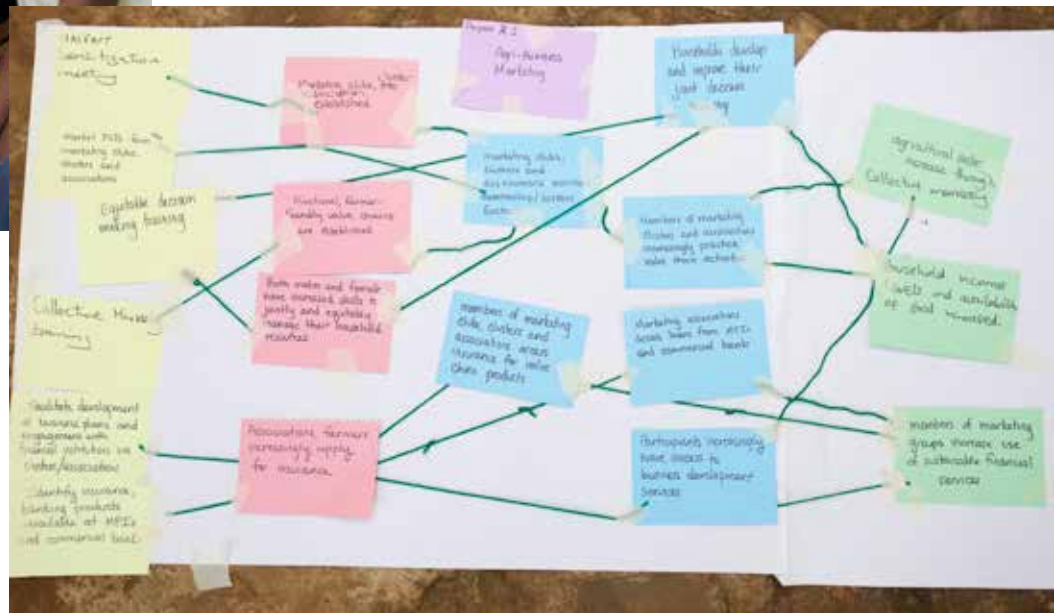
HANDOUT



ET Activity Report Guidance

Break

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

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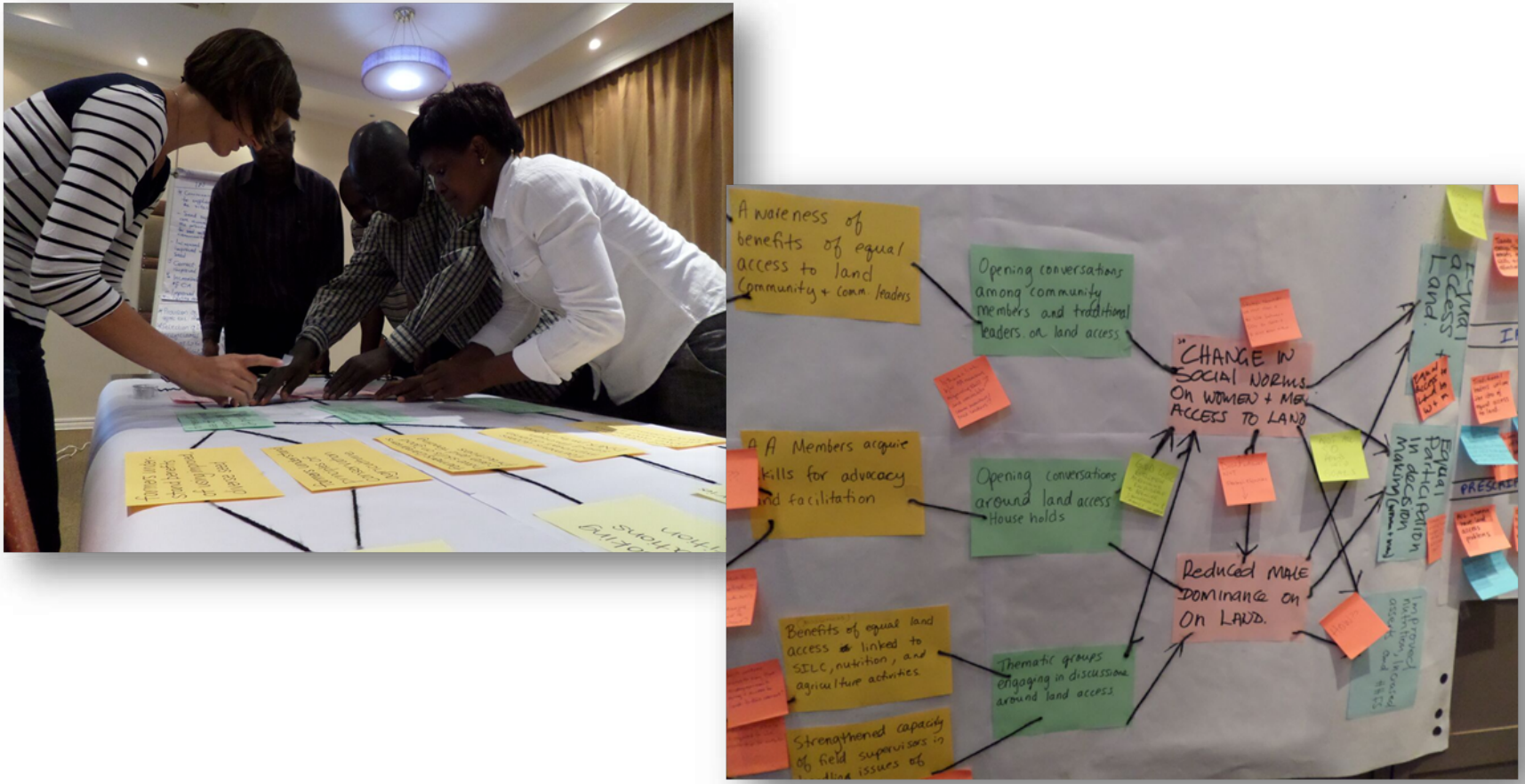
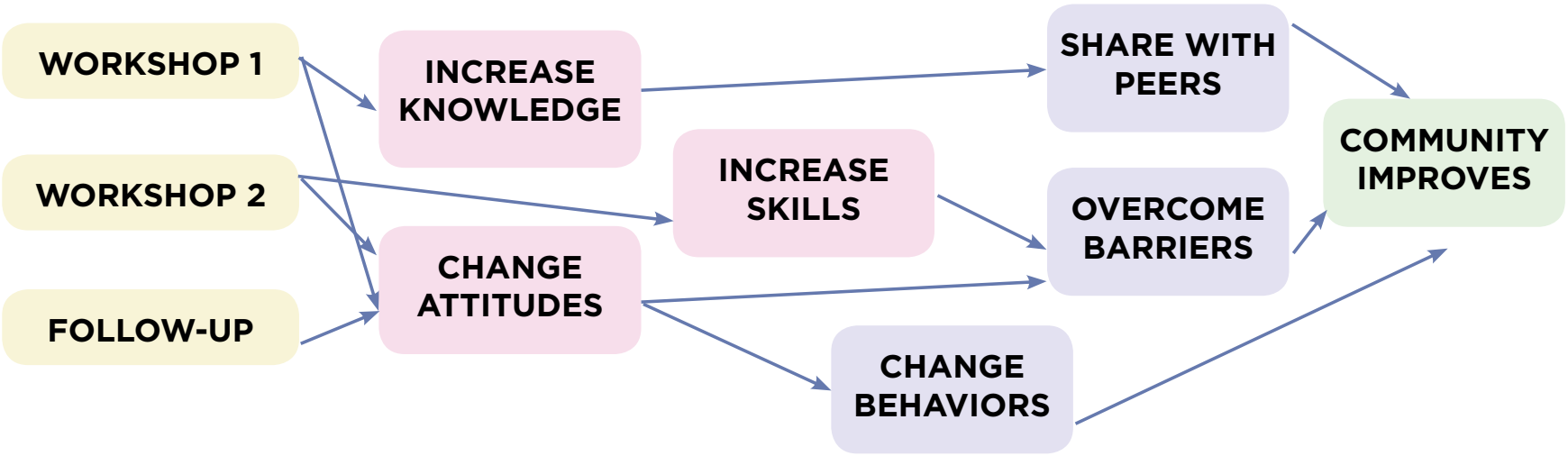
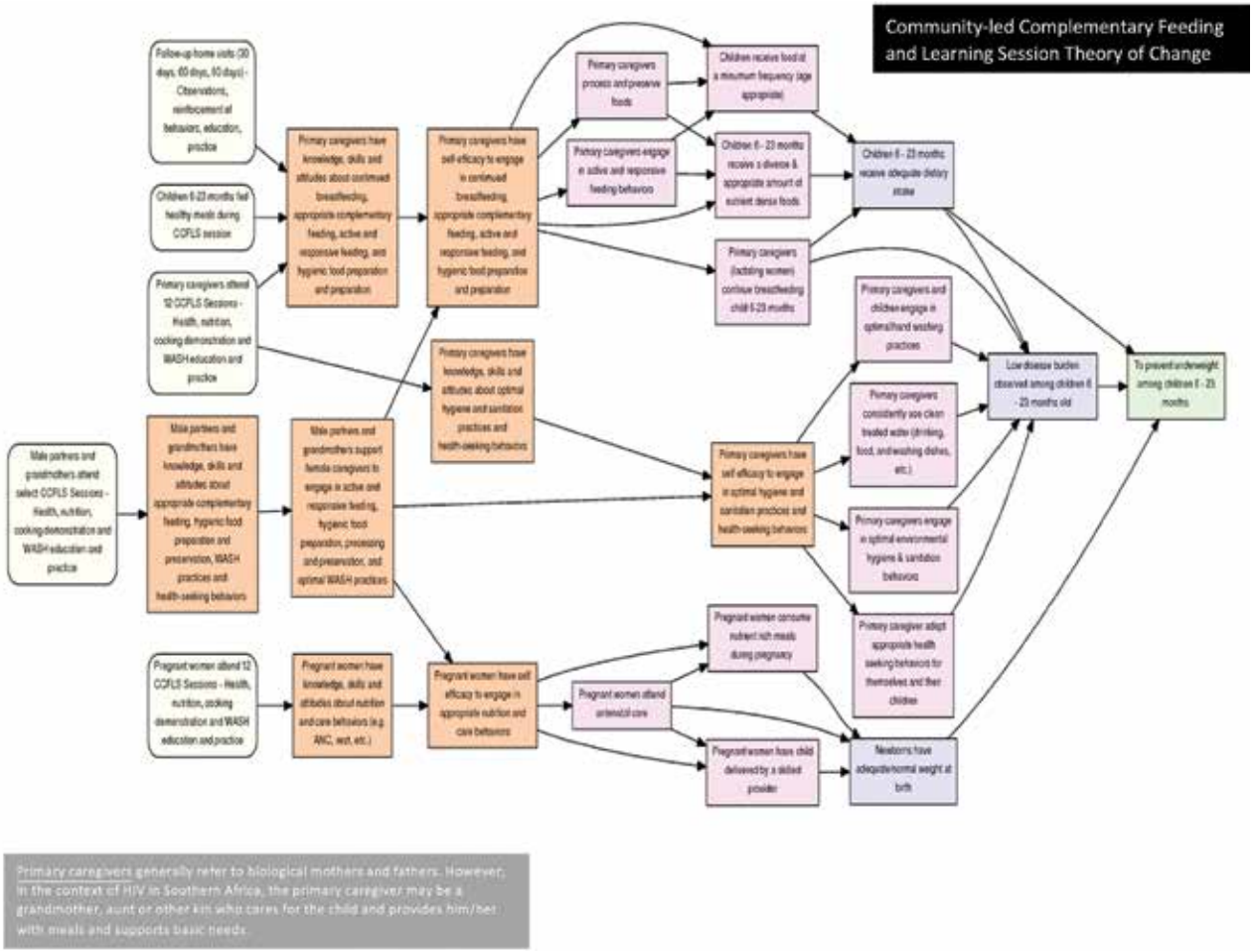
Theory of Change Pathway Models



Theory of Change Pathway Model



Theory of Change Pathway Model



Looks complex? Programs are complex! We should reflect this complexity in our models, and consider it in planning and MEAL work!

HANDOUT

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

Revisit and Revise Assumptions

Revisit and revise the
ToC Pathway Model
from Round 1

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Lunch

ENERGIZER

Bottle Race

ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION

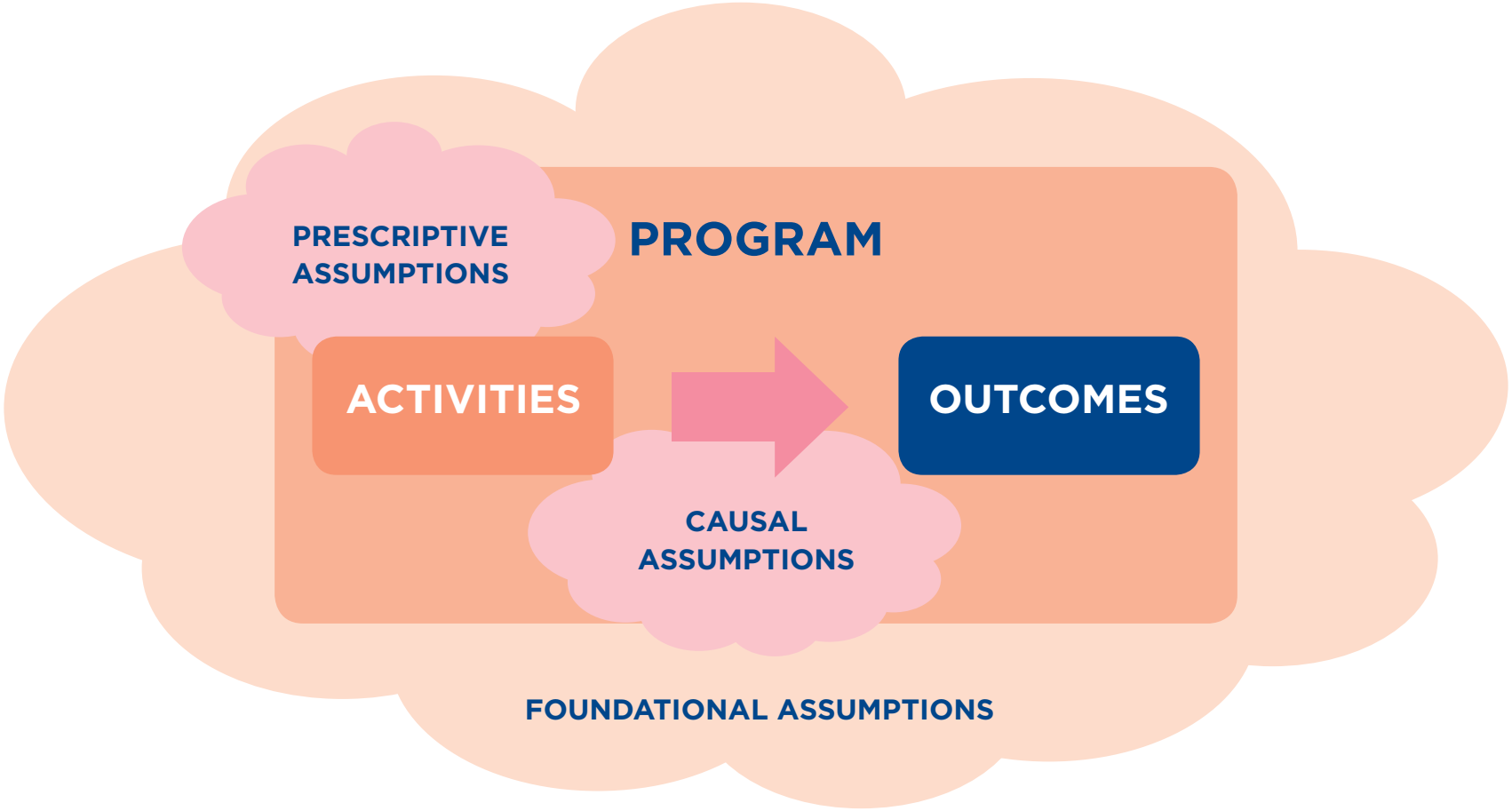
HANDOUT

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.

Program Assumptions



Program Assumptions

- Causal
- Prescriptive
- Foundational

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.*

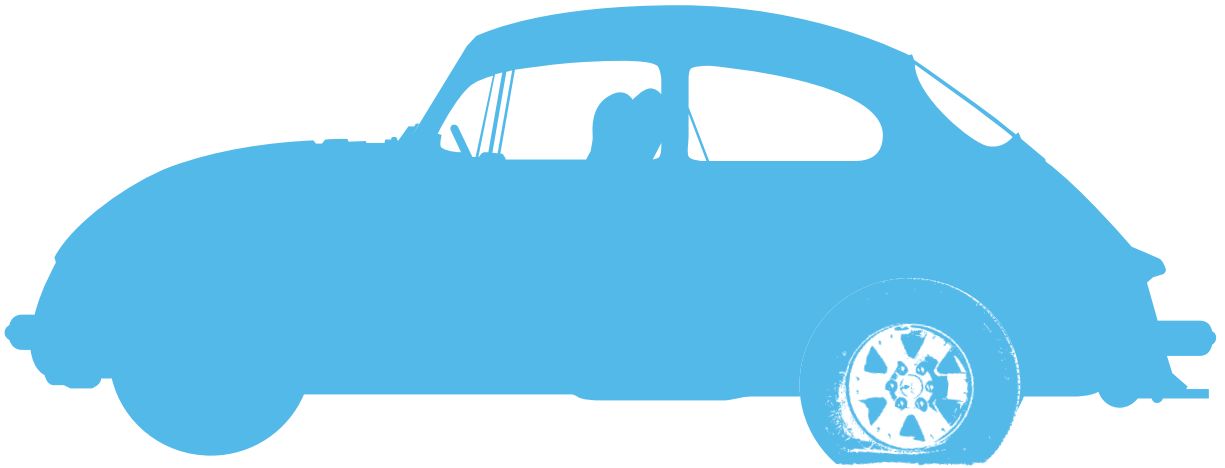
Foundational Assumptions

- 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.*

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.



Program Assumptions

- Review your pathway model and then…
- Brainstorm as many assumptions about your program as you can. Consider stakeholder perspectives and context as you brainstorm.
- Assign one notetaker and record the output of your brainstorm on chart paper.

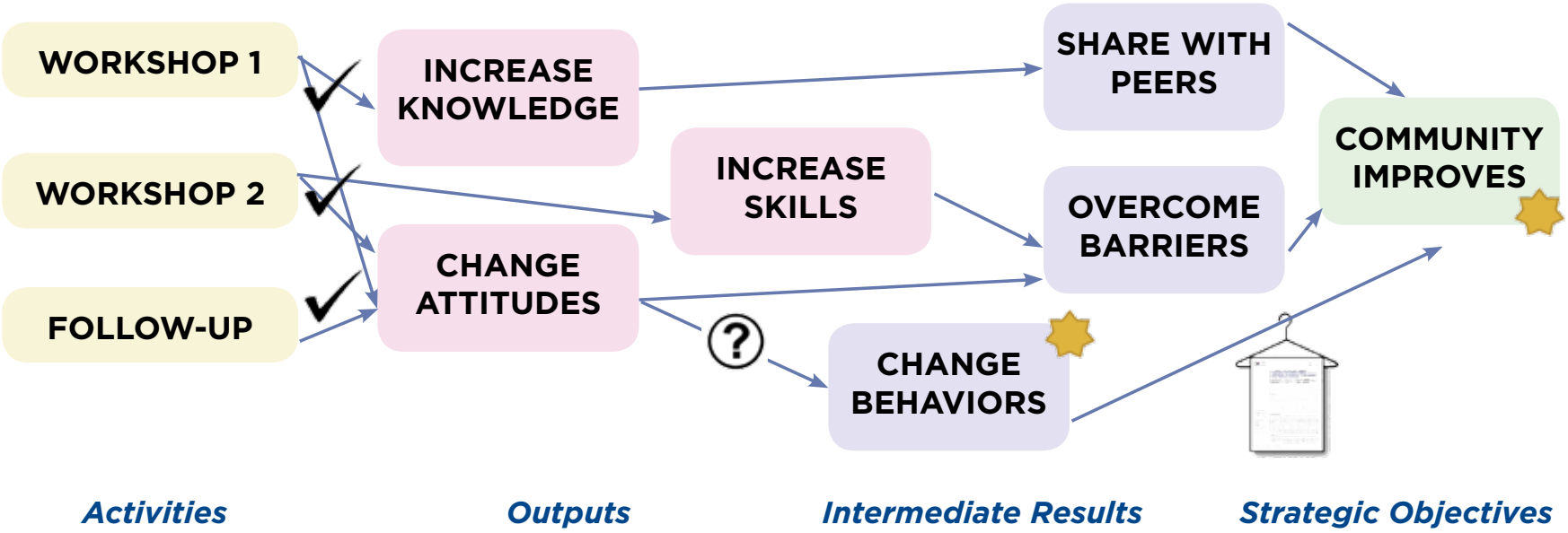
Break

ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION

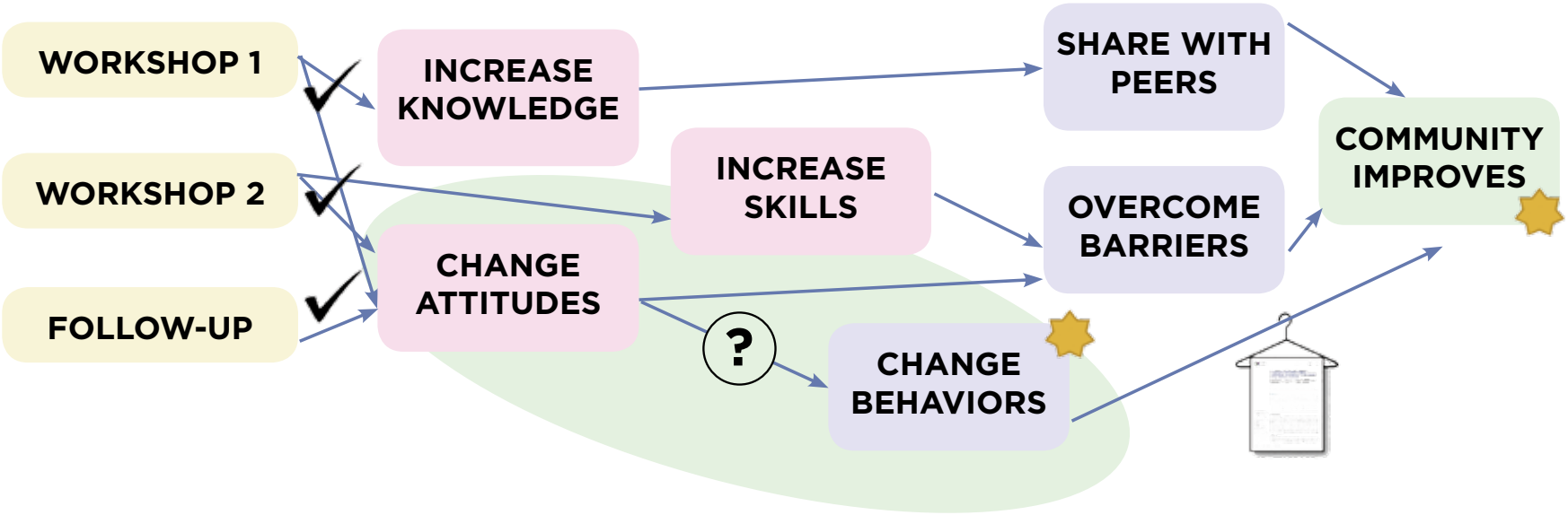
HANDOUT

Mining the Model

Mining the Model



Mining the Model



Reflection

Thinking about ET:

- 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?

Handouts from Day 1

- Consent form
- Pre-workshop survey
- What is Evaulative Thinking?
- ET strategies and activities
- ET activity report guidance
- The MEAL system
- Theory of Change Pathway Models
- Notes for developing ToC Pathway Models
- Identifying assumptions
- Mining the model

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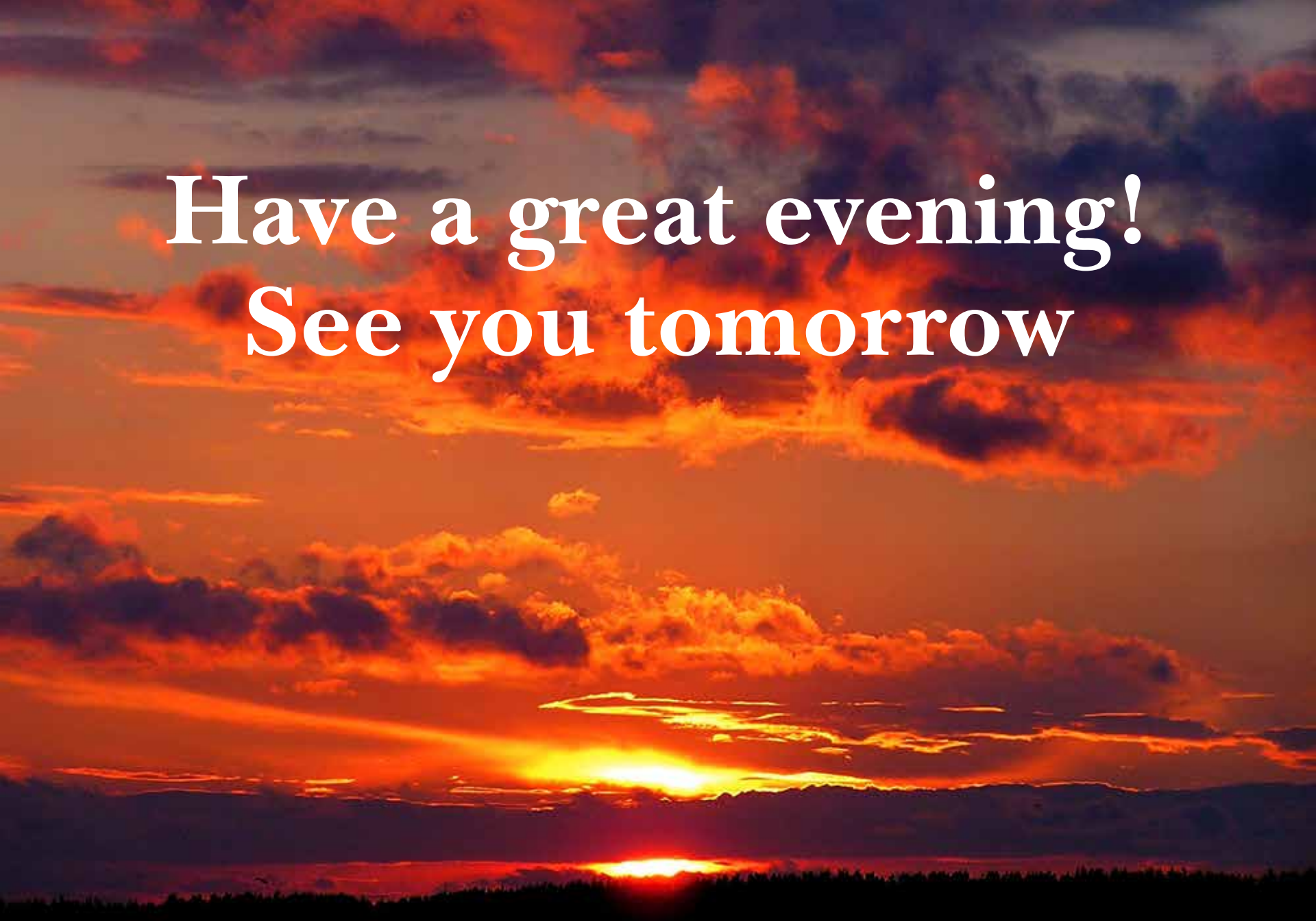
Have a great evening!
See you tomorrow


Good morning!

Any questions from yesterday?

Agenda Day 2

Time	Task
9:00am	Goals for the day
9:15am	Finish Mining the Model
10:00am	Introduction to learning plans and questions
10:30am	Break
10:45am	Developing learning questions
12:00pm	Lunch
1:00pm	Alignment, developing learning plans
2:15pm	Break
2:30pm	Developing learning plans
4:00pm	Reflect and debrief
4:30pm	Close

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Goals for the Day

- Share the results of Mining the Model
- Develop learning questions based on ToC work and knowledge of alignment
- Develop project learning plans
- Peer review project learning plans

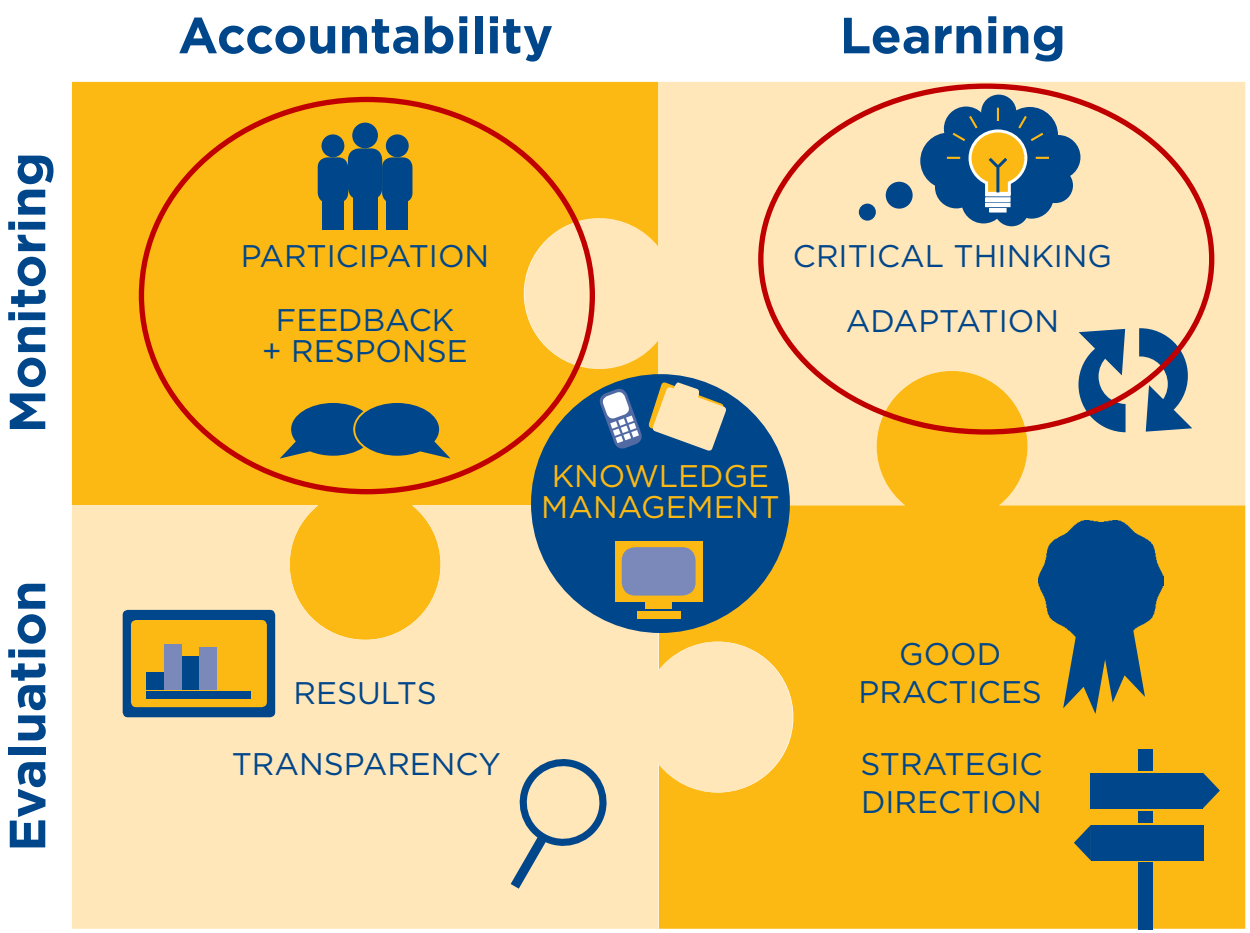
Determining Learning Scope

- Now that you have finished Mining the Model, you should be able to identify a small area of your model (just a few boxes and arrows) that represents the parts of your program on which you would like to focus a learning plan. This is called the learning scope.
- Take a few minutes to discuss the results of the Mining the Model activity with your group. Then, draw a circle (maybe an oval or other odd shape) around your agreed upon learning scope.

Report out on Mining the Model

- Which area(s) of your model have you chosen to focus on?
- Why did you choose this area?

Learning Planning



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, and reflections we had?)

Learning Planning

EVALUATIVE THINKING

FORMAL EVALUATION

IMMEDIATE ADAPTATION

LEARNING PLANS

LESS FORMAL EVIDENCE GATHERING FOR LOCAL USE

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Project Learning Plan

- A learning plan is a document that guides the implementation of an evidence-gathering strategy and is essentially the response to a learning question. It includes a description of the program, the program model, the overall goal of the plan, the learning question, and a detailed description of the evidence-gathering strategy (sample, measurement, measures, design, analysis plan, etc. as applicable)
- Depending on the goal, the plan may be implemented by program staff or external parties, but program staff should always have a voice in developing the plan.

Project Learning Plan Development

- Every plan will be different depending on your purpose.
- It must allow a stranger to step in, understand the thinking behind your plan, and effectively implement it
- Includes two main parts:
    - Program information
    - Evidence-gathering plan

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Project Learning Plan Development

Project description

- Copy of model
- Brief description of project
- Key assumptions
- Context
- Key stakeholder interests
- Brief history of program (if applicable)

Evidence-gathering plan

- Purpose statement
- Learning questions and intended claims
- Who? What? When? Where? and How? of evidence gathering /data collection
- Copies of any measurement tools
- Outline of how gathered evidence will be handled, analyzed and used, as applicable

Project Learning Plan Development

~~Project description~~

- ~~Copy of model~~
- ~~Brief description of project~~
- ~~Key assumptions~~
- ~~Context~~
- ~~Key stakeholder interests~~
- ~~Brief history of program (if applicable)~~

Evidence-gathering Plan

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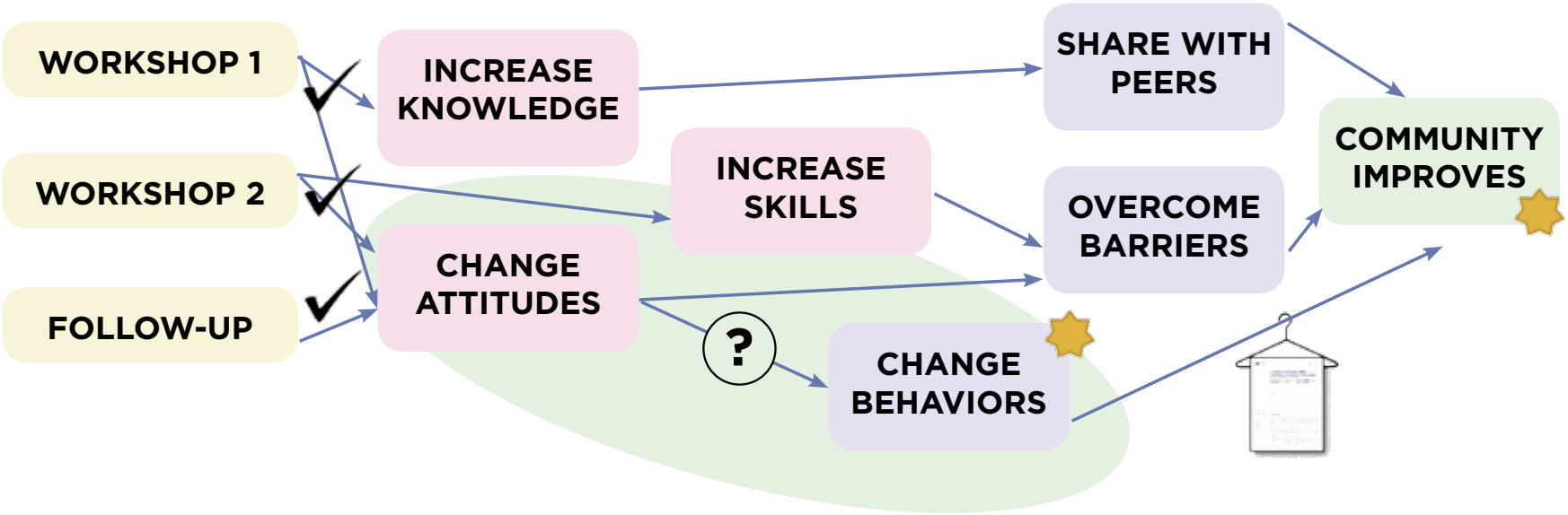
Learning Questions

Learning Questions



Learning Questions

What kinds of questions might a program be asking about this component of their work?

Learning Questions

What kinds of questions might a program be asking about this short-term outcome?

Learning Questions

LQ1	LQ1A
Is participation in activity X associated with outcome Y?	Does activity X cause outcome Y?

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Learning Questions

Examples:

- Is activity X associated with outcome Y?
- Do participants report that they are satisfied with activity X?
- Does activity X cause participants to experience outcome Y?
- Do participants report experiencing outcome Y?
    - Which participants do/don't report experiencing outcome Y?
    - What differentiates them and the experiences they report?

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Claims

Claims

Claims are what you can say with more certainty once you have answered the learning question.

- Learning question: Is Activity X associated with outcome Y?
- Claim: Activity X is associated with outcome Y

  OR
- Claim: Activity X is not associated with outcome Y

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Claims

Learning question	Claim
Do participants report they are satisfied with Activity X?	
Does Activity X cause participants to experience Outcome Y?	
Do participants report experiencing Outcome Y?	
Which participants do/don't report experiencing Outcome Y?	
What differentiates them and the experiences they report?	

Break

Developing Learning Questions

Brainstorm Learning Questions

See handouts:

Guidance for Wording Learning Questions

and

Developing Learning Questions (Part I)

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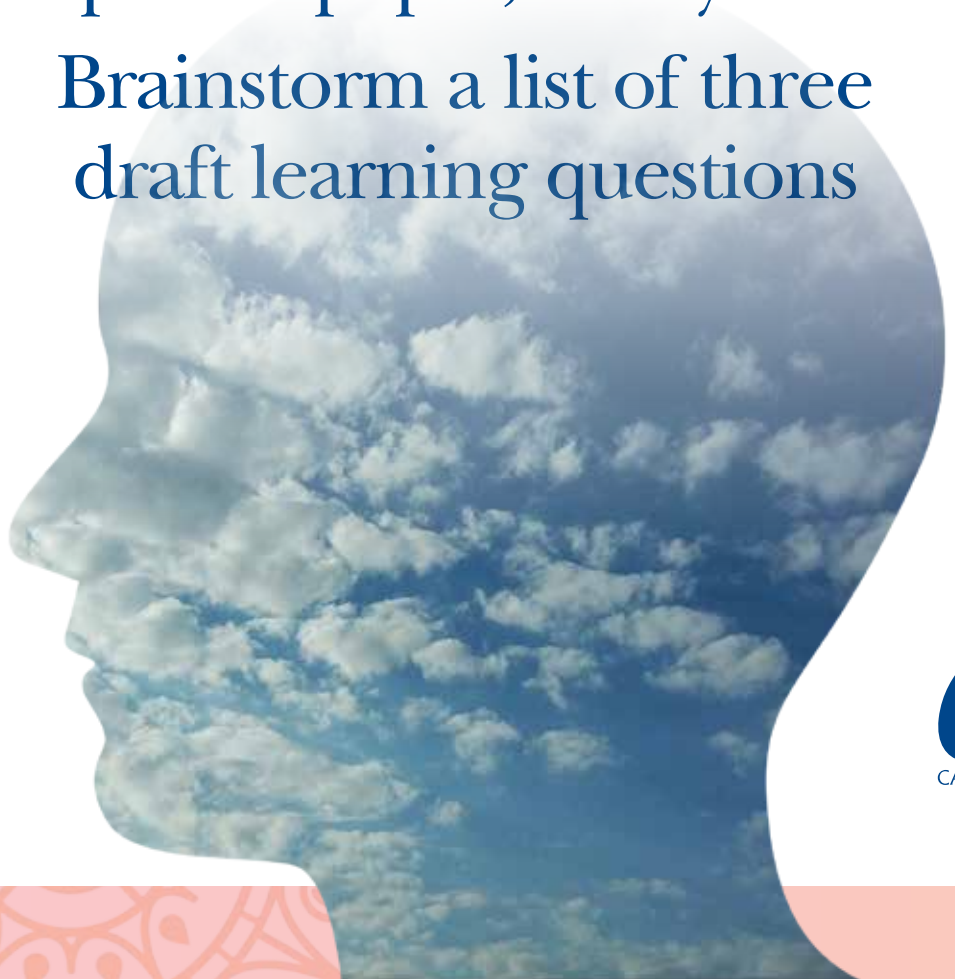
Brainstorm Learning Questions

On flipchart paper, with your team:

Brainstorm a list of three
draft learning questions



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Constructs

Those hard-to-define variables that you often want to collect evidence about. Such as:

KNOWLEDGE

MOTIVATION

AWARENESS

INTEREST

ACCESS

Constructs

Learning question example:
Do participants in my program have access to healthy foods?

Evaluative thinking:

What assumptions are we making in posing this question?

How would our stakeholders define this construct?

How are we defining this construct?

See handouts:

Developing Learning Questions (Part II)

and

Key Constructs and Measurement

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Select One Learning Question

- The question you select now will determine the direction of your project learning plan/learning agenda for this cycle.

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Lunch

HANDOUT

Alignment defined

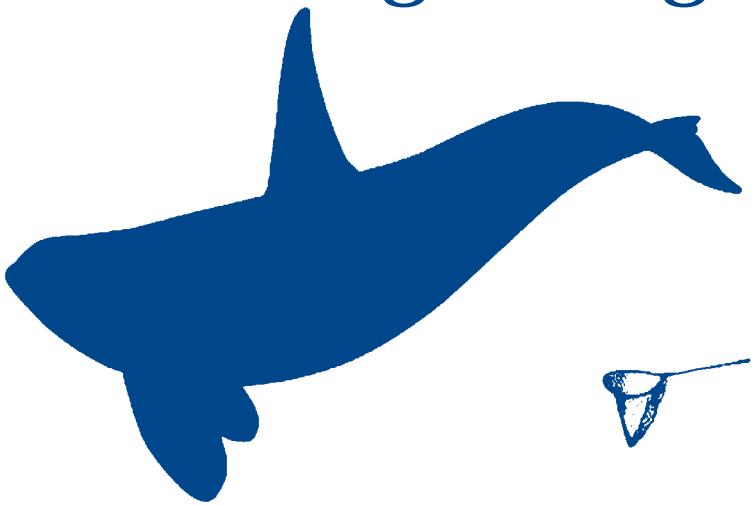
A project learning plan is 'aligned' when the methods proposed will lead to the collection of the evidence/data that will allow the evaluation question to be credibly addressed.

In other words: A project learning plan is well aligned when the question, methodology and intended claim "match up."

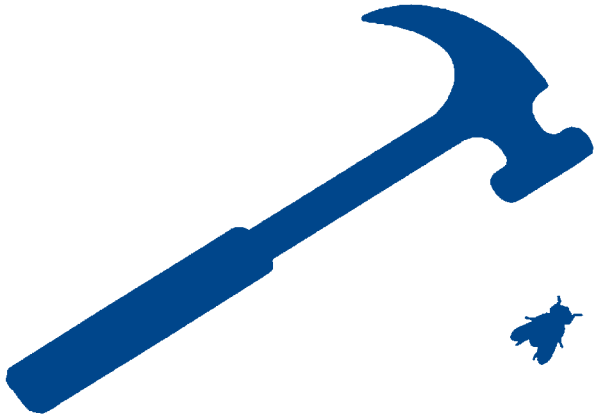
See handout: *Alignment defined*

Evidence Gathering

Selecting the right method for the job



Simple post-event satisfaction surveys are not really adequate for ensuring good ("big") decisions about a long-established, consistently implemented, and possibly large program.



Complex strategies (perhaps with control groups and randomization) are inappropriate for evaluating newly developed programs, or for making relatively "small" decisions.

Alignment

Question	Method	Intended Claim
Is participation in our ET training program associated with an increase in knowledge?	Measure knowledge using a survey both before (pre) and after (post) the ET training program	Participants demonstrated an increase in ET knowledge after participating in the ET training program as compared to before.

Misalignment

Question	Method	Intended Claim
How do participants intend to change their behavior after participating in the ET training program?	Post-program focus group	Participants change their behavior as a results of participating in the ET training program.

Alignment Reflection

- How does ET help with alignment?

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ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION

HANDOUT

Learning Plan Purpose Statement

With your team:

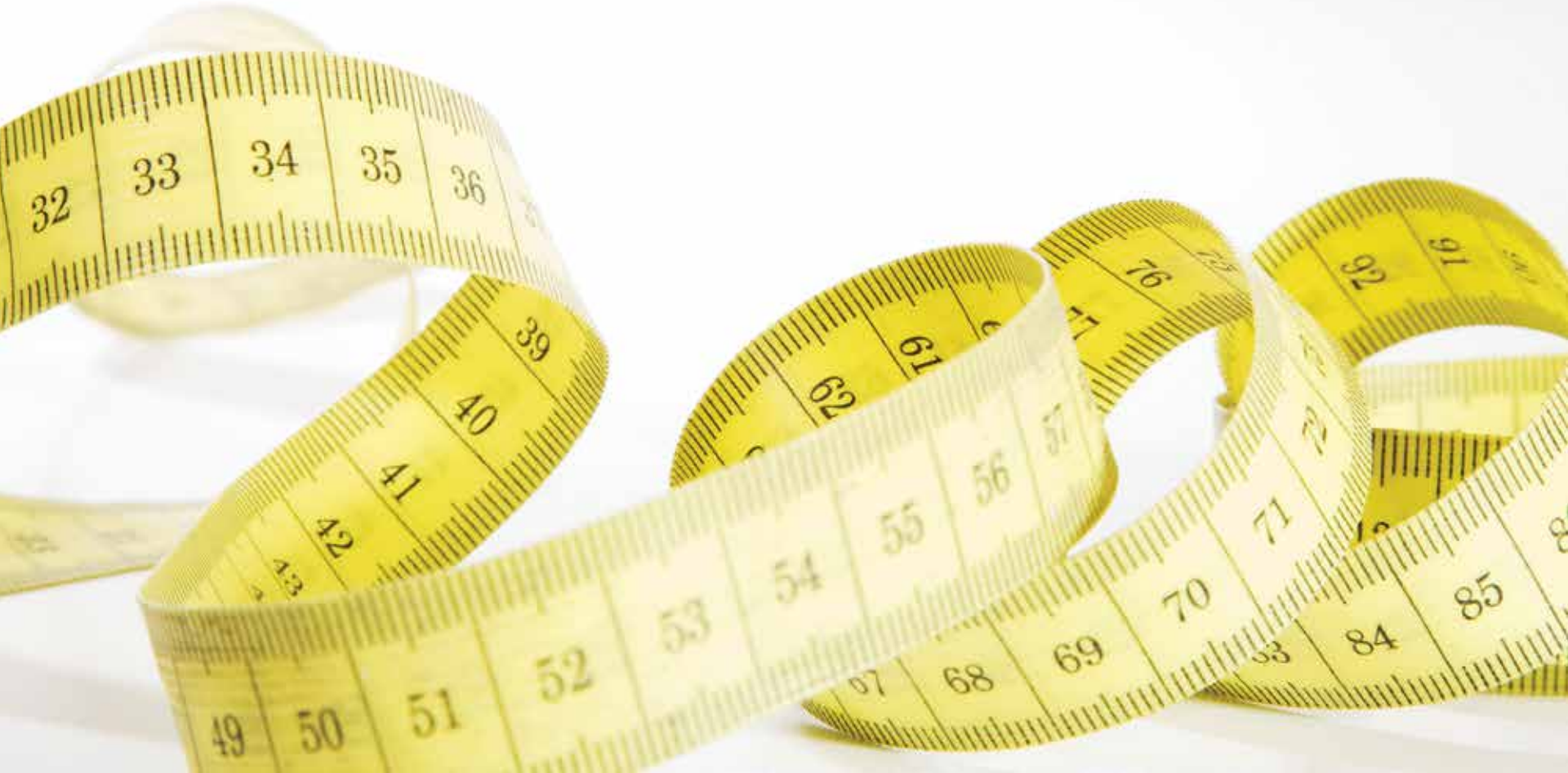
- Based on the LQs you've developed, come to a consensus about the overall goal of this evidence-gathering effort (Will this be a formal evaluation designed to meet stakeholder needs, managed by someone other that program staff? Or are you designing a less-formal learning plan, possibly for internal purposes?)
- Compose a short paragraph or list that describes your overall goal, what you want to know and/or be able to claim at the end, and a defense of your choice.

Break

Project Learning Plan

The
WHY
WHAT
WHO
HOW
and
WHEN
of evidence gathering

Measurement



Broad categories of Measurement

Quantitative Measurement
provides numerically quantifiable data

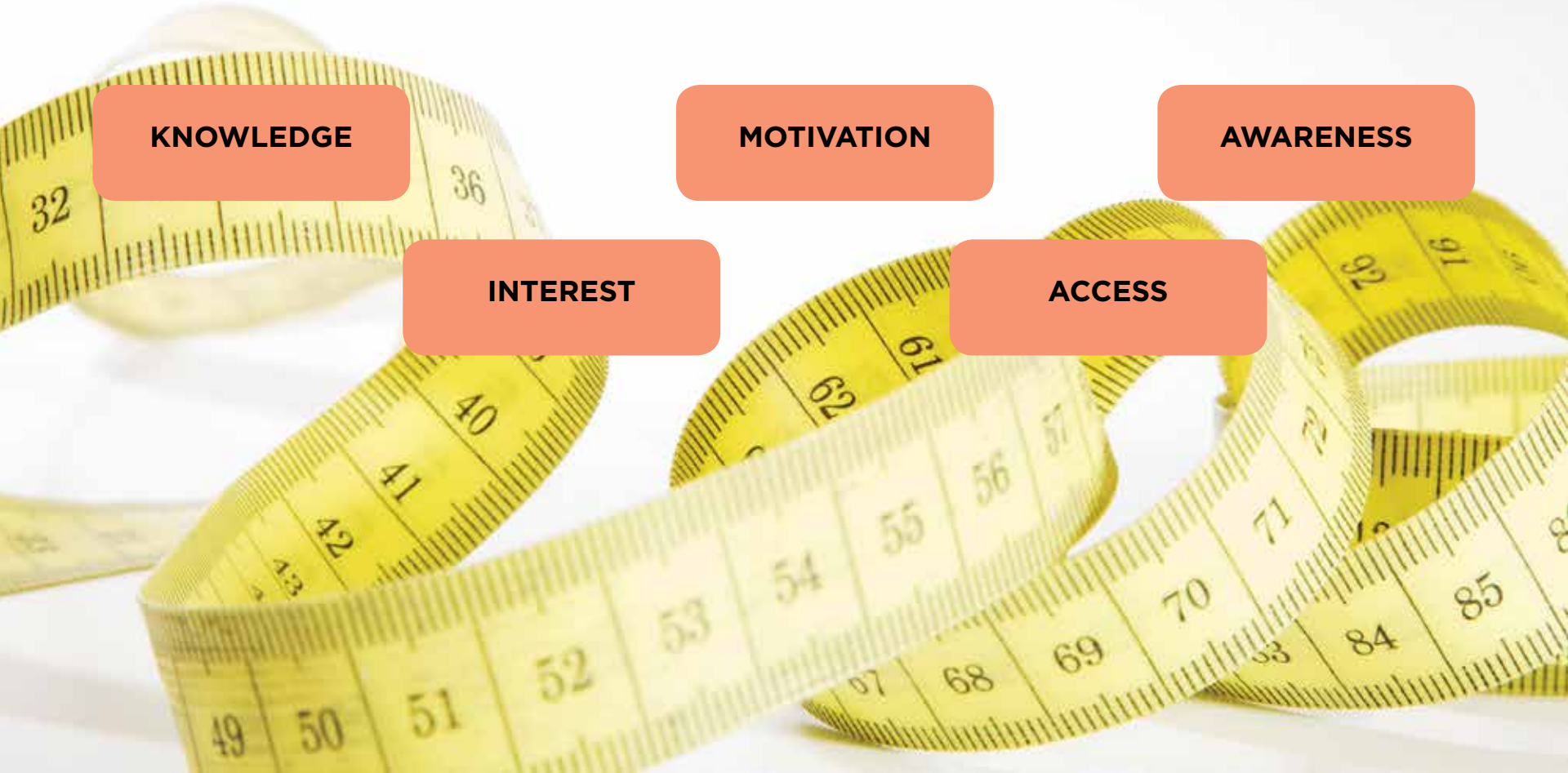
Qualitative Measurement
provides non-numerical data

Direct Measurement
collects information using interviews with and observations of those being studied, or of those close to the object of study

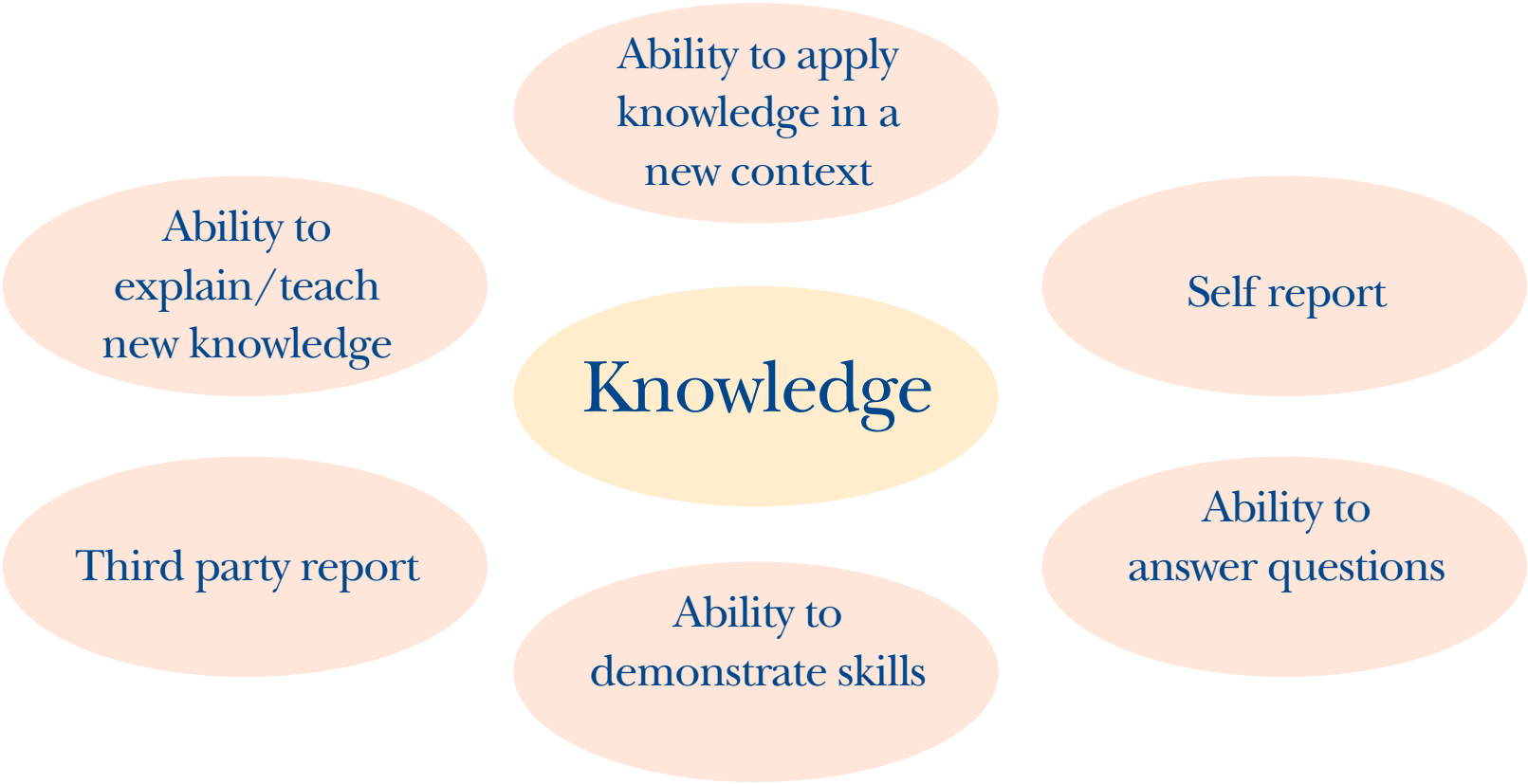
Indirect Measurement
collects information using a proxy for those or that being measured

Recall Constructs

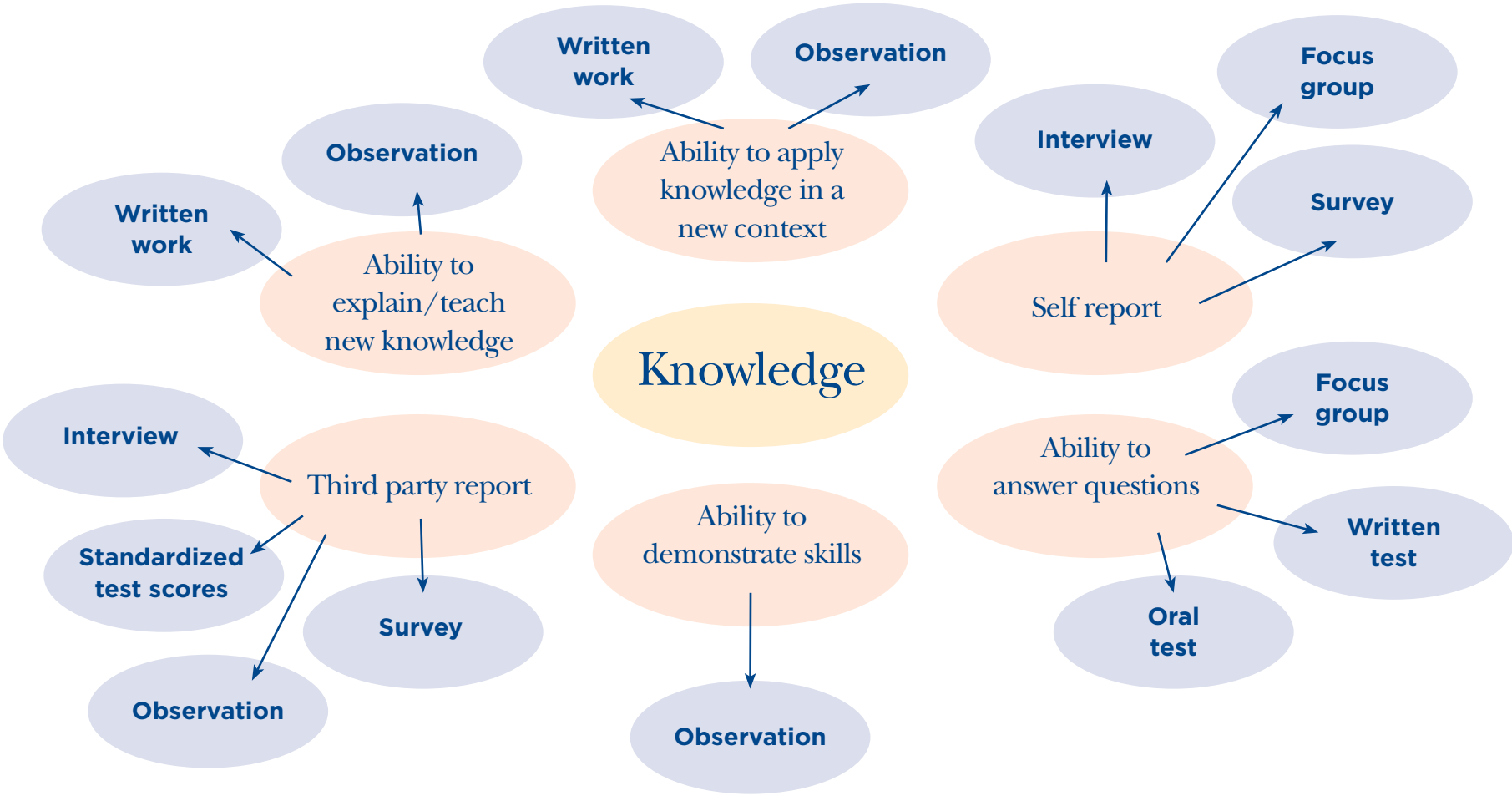
(what we are trying to measure)



Indicators


Ability to apply knowledge in a new context
Ability to explain/teach new knowledge
Knowledge
Self report
Third party report
Ability to demonstrate skills
Ability to answer questions

Indicators


Written work
Observation
Observation
Written work
Ability to apply knowledge in a new context
Ability to explain/teach new knowledge
Knowledge
Interview
Focus group
Survey
Self report
Interview
Third party report
Standardized test scores
Survey
Observation
Ability to demonstrate skills
Observation
Focus group
Ability to answer questions
Written test
Oral test

ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION

Learning Plan Development

The
WHY
WHAT
WHO
HOW
and
WHEN
of evidence gathering

Learning Plan Development

See handouts:

Project Learning Plan

Learning Plan Template

Learning Plan Template: Table Format

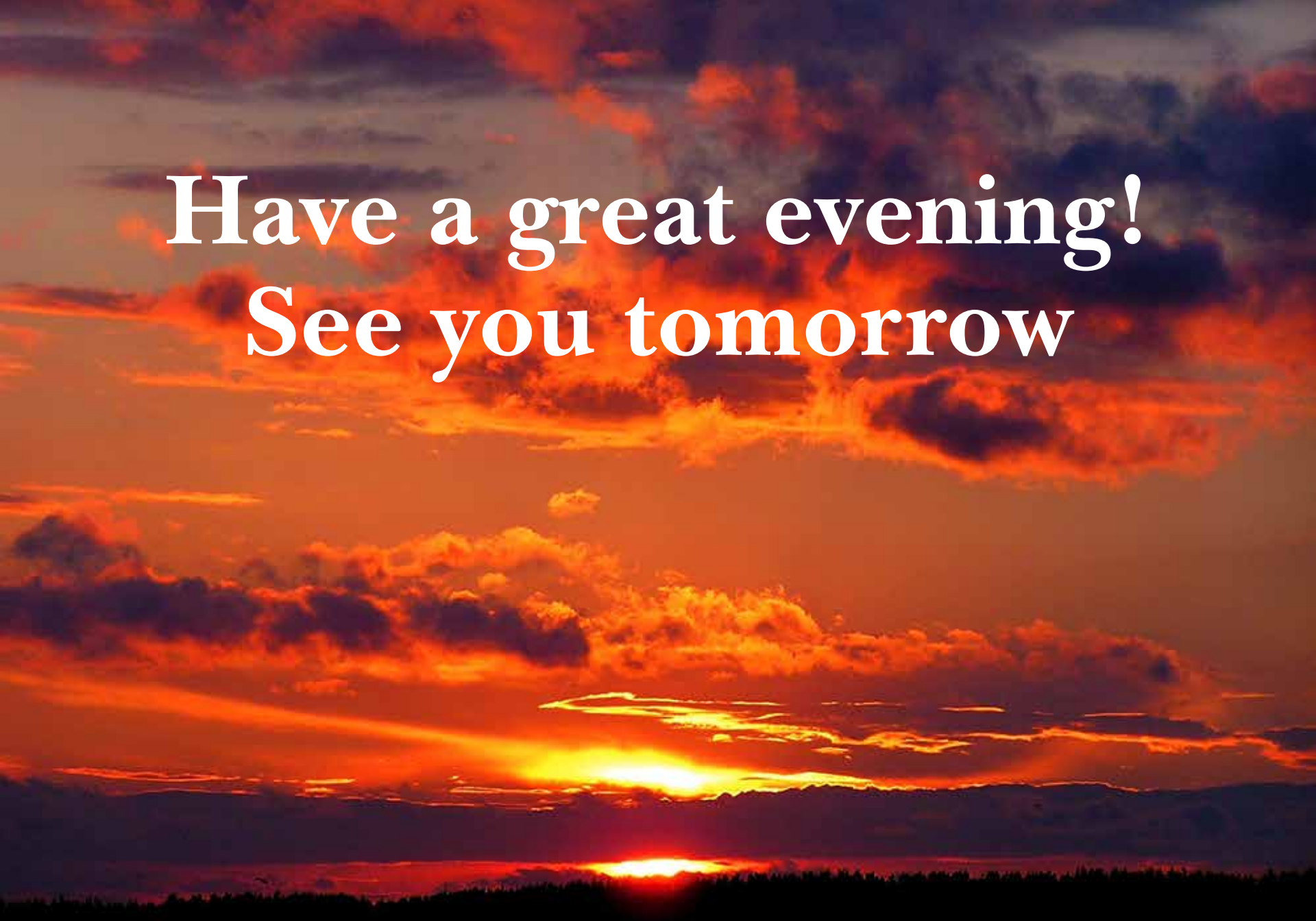
Reflection

Thinking about today's workshop:

- How are evaluative thinking and learning planning related?
- Why is ET important even in cases when you are not part of the learning planning team?
- What are you still unsure about after today's workshop?
- How could today's activities better meet the goals set out in the morning?

Handouts from Day 2

- Guidance for wording learning questions
- Developing learning questions
- Key constructs and measurement
- Alignment defined
- Learning plan purpose statement
- Project learning plan
- Learning plan template


Have a great evening!
See you tomorrow


Good morning!

Questions from yesterday

Agenda Day 3

Time	Task
9:00am	Goals for the day
9:15am	Learning plan peer review
10:15am	Break
10:30am	Learning plan utilization
11:00am	Learning plan simulation
12:30am	Lunch
1:30pm	Overcoming barriers to ET
2:30pm	Break
2:45pm	Being an ET champion
4:00pm	Reflect and debrief/post-workshop survey
4:30pm	Close

Goals for the Day

- Conduct peer reviews of learning plans
- Explore how ET fits in with interpretation and reporting of results
- Understand the relationships between ET, MEAL, and program development
- Brainstorm strategies for overcoming barriers to ET
- Discuss what it means to be an ET champion

ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION

HANDOUT

Learning Plan Peer Review

See handout:

Learning Plan Review Guidance

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Break

Using information gained from implementing learning plans

Report to stakeholders

- What you learned
- What evidence you have
- What changes will be made

Improve the program

- Make or recommend changes based on evidence collected

Plan for future learning

- Revisit the ToC, revise, identify new assumptions, pose new questions

Utilization

Often we think of this …

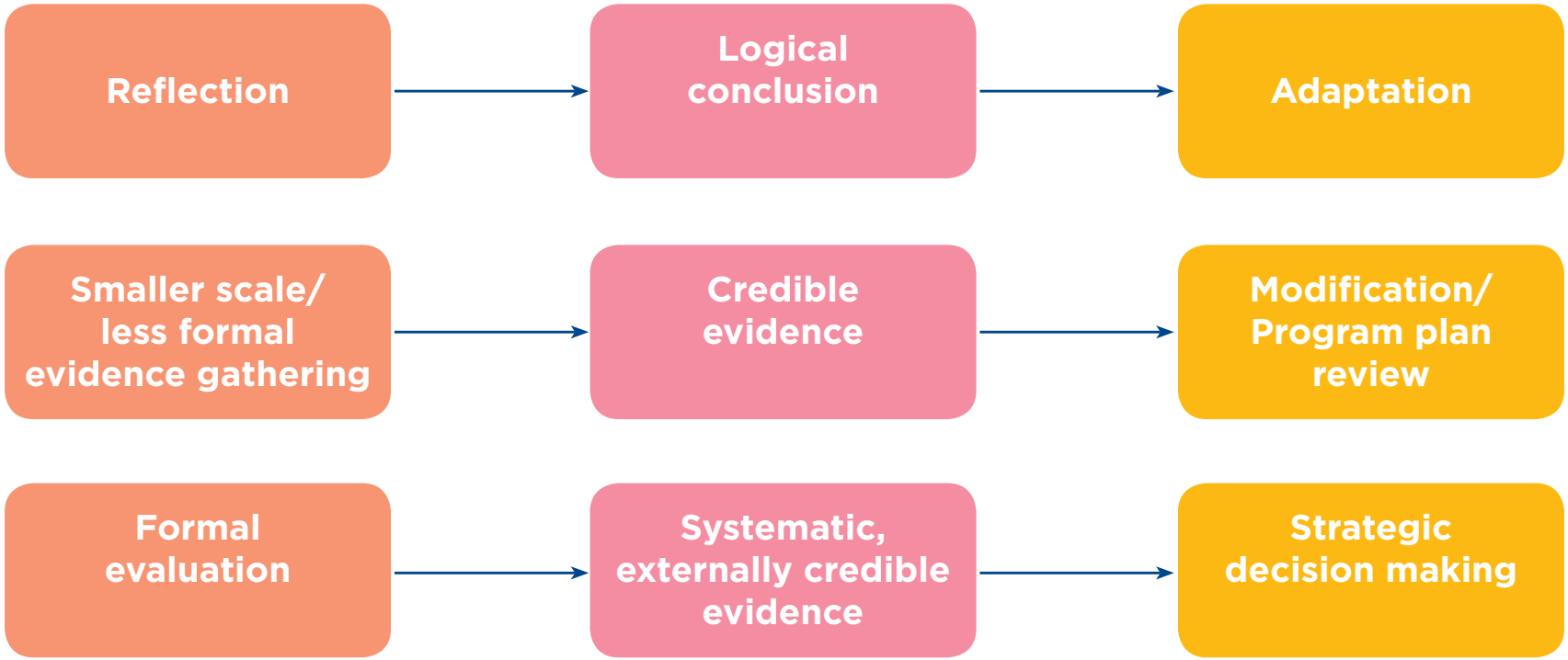
… and forget about this

Utilization and Program Development

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.

Where do my results lead?

Utilization and Program Development



Reflection

Think back on your learning plan outline from the point of view of utilization and program development:

- Do you think you plan will be useful? In what specific ways?
- Does thinking about utilization and program development inspire you to make any revisions to your learning plan? If so, what?

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ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION

HANDOUT

Learning Plan Simulation

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Critical Review

1. Read the program description, LQs and purpose statement. Discuss the following prompts with your group.
    - What assumptions might these program implementers be making? In the purpose of the program, the LQs and/or the learning purpose statement?

Critical Review

2. Read the survey questions. Do the following with your group:

- Identify which focus group questions address which LQ(s). Do you think these survey questions were well written?
- What claims WILL they be able to make with the results of these focus group questions? Does this line up with their purpose?

Critical Review

3. Consider this learning plan overall. With your group, come up with a recommendation for this project:
    - What changes should be made to the learning plan and measurement strategy (if any)? Why?

Critical Review

Share out / Reflection

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Lunch

Barriers to Evaluative Thinking

Overcoming Barriers to ET

Working in groups:

- Think through several strategies for overcoming the barrier you've been assigned
- Prepare a short presentation for the larger group

See also handout: *Overcoming Barriers to ET* and *Principles for Promoting ET*

Break

ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION

World Café

1. What does it mean to be a champion of ET?
2. How could this group work together to promote a culture of ET/learning?
3. What are some strategies for talking with colleagues, beneficiaries, supervisors, funders, etc. about ET, MEAL and learning?

ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION

HANDOUT

Learning-to-Action Plan

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Handouts from Day 3

- Learning plan review guidance
- Learning plan simulation
- Overcoming barriers to ET
- Principles for promoting ET
- Learning-to-action plan
- Post-workshop survey

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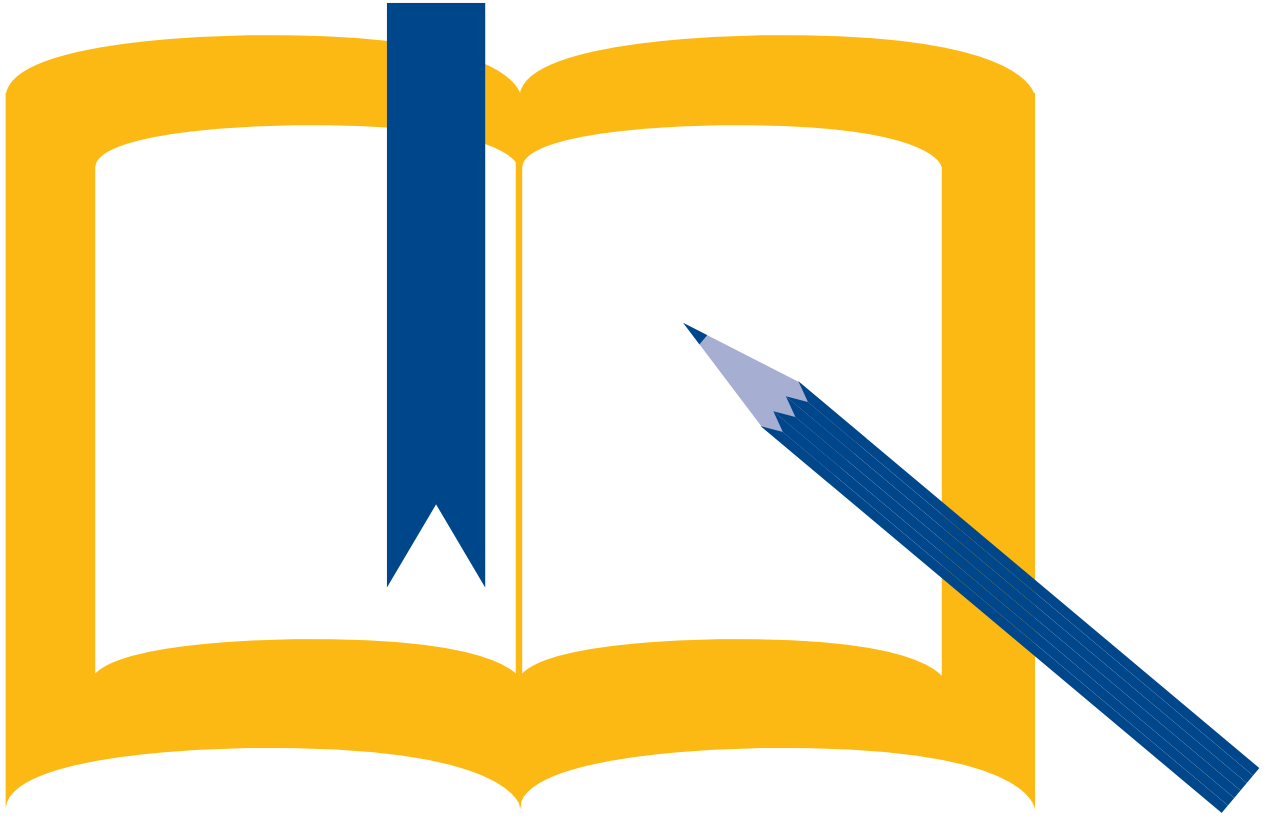
Organizing your ET notebook



Organizing your ET notebook

Day 1 Handouts	Day 2 Handouts	Day 3 Handouts
Consent form	Guidance for wording learning questions	Learning plan review guidance
Pre-workshop survey	Developing learning questions	Learning plan simulation
What is evaluative thinking?	Key constructs and measurement	Overcoming barriers to ET
ET strategies and activities	Alignment defined	Principles for promoting ET
ET activity report guidance	Learning plan purpose statement	Learning-to-action plan
The MEAL system	Project learning plan	Post-workshop survey
Theory of Change Pathway Models	Learning plan template	
Notes for developing ToC Pathway Models	Learning plan template: Table format	
Identifying assumptions		
Mining the model		

HANDOUT

Post-Workshop Survey

- Please fill out the Post-Workshop Survey


Thank you!

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