Evaluative Thinking

Taking Action

ET WORKSHOP

ROUND 3 • GROUPS 1 + 2

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Introductions

Please share:

- Your name
- Your project(s)/area of work
- Give a recent example of when you used evidence to make a decision at home

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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			
Group 2	Senior program staff			X
Group 3	Country leadership			

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

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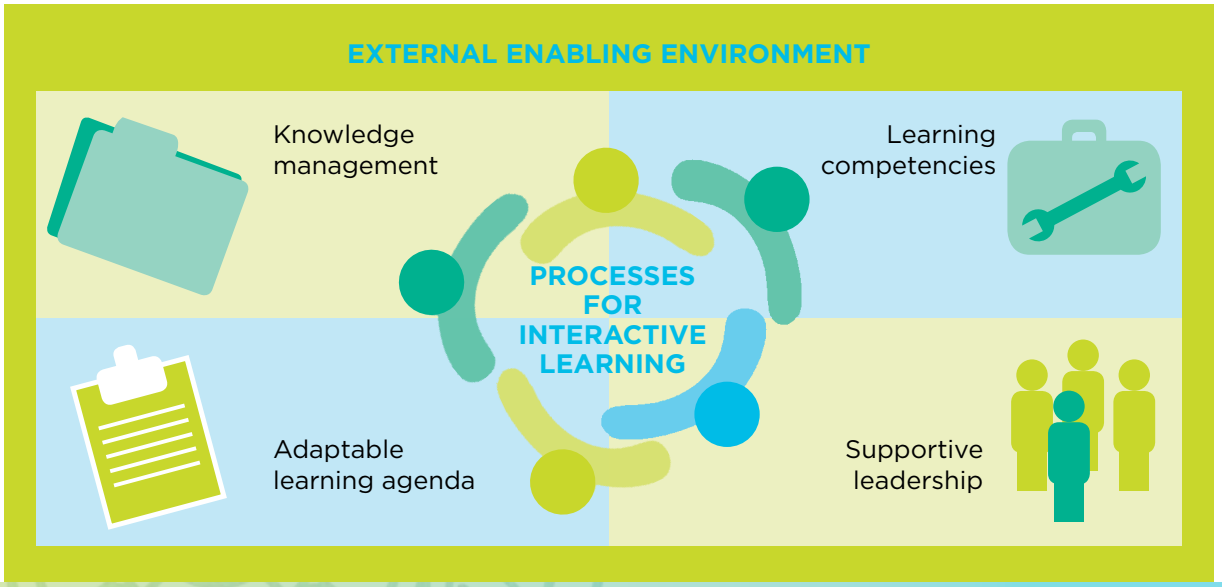
3 key enablers to support learning

Learning organization

- **Culture + leadership**
- **Skills + capability**
- **Tools + systems**

LEARNING WITH PURPOSE: A FRAMEWORK



Organizational Learning

Culture + Leadership	Skills + Capabilities	Tools + Systems
Learning as a strategic investment Evaluative thinking	Engagement and commitment Evaluative thinking	Evidence-based decision making Evaluative thinking
Stakeholder involvement Evaluative thinking	Making it safe to learn Evaluative thinking	Learning is embedded in the delivery process Evaluative thinking
Leadership role modelling Evaluative thinking	Learning in connected networks Evaluative thinking	Systems for capturing and sharing lessons Evaluative thinking

Adapted from a slide presented by Chris Collison at the Organisational Learning and Knowledge Management Masterclass, DFID, December 15, 2015

9 success factors, same 3 enablers

Culture + Leadership	Skills + Capabilities	Tools + Systems
Learning as a strategic investment	Engagement and commitment	Evidence-based decision making
Stakeholder involvement	Making it safe to learn	Learning is embedded in the delivery process
Leadership role modelling	Learning in connected networks	Systems for capturing and sharing lessons

Learning as a strategic investment

- Learning is an agency priority – with MEAL as a core competency – and will help CRS maximise its impact
- Invest time and resources to support organizational learning and track improvements
- Incremental steps are better than no steps

Stakeholder involvement

- Identify champions to embed a culture of learning in the fabric of CRS
- Involve a wide range of partners in our learning efforts – learn from them, share what we learn, joint approaches
- Avoid group think: Diversity, 'black hat' or 'devil's advocate' teams

Leadership role modeling

- Open debates: Encourage multiple perspectives and invite questioning
- Support intentional learning
- Ask the questions: What have you learnt? Have you shared this? What don't you know? How can we help?

Engagement and commitment

- MEAL competencies and supporting curricula
- Learning is everyone's responsibility: Incorporate learning in recruitment and onboarding processes
- Build staff capability: In knowledge management approaches; to use evidence and know-how; to apply collaborative learning practices and help others to do this; facilitation skills to support learning
- Surge capacity and support
- Positive recognition for those doing it well

Making it safe to learn

- Protect time and space for learning: Be comfortable in the unknown, don't rush to conclusion
- To question is not to criticize
- Safe-to-fail experiments: Monitoring as evaluation
- Encourage people to talk about what's not working as well as what is. Learn from mistakes, don't just move on.

Learning in connected networks

- Connections not collections: KML Community of Practice; other communities of practice (internal and external)
- Set up ‘Ask Me’ procedures; MEAL service desk; MEAL Solutions Exchange on Gateway Chatter
- Build demand not just supply
- Iterative approaches

Evidence-based decision making

- Monitoring as evaluation; evaluative thinking; mixed methods; SenseMaking
- Be clear on evidence used to inform decisions (knowledge and know-how)
- Watch out for optimism bias, and be clear when we don't have enough evidence
- Identify and target learning priority gaps: Keep it simple – don't overthink every little problem or possibility, but focus on the 'sticky' issues

Learning is embedded in the delivery process

- Systematic not sporadic: Comply with MPPs and additional good practices; MPP self-assessment; Use of checklists to embed evaluative thinking and learning
- Requires collective effort
- New ways of working: more emphasis on teams

Systems for capturing and sharing lessons

- Primary focus on people/networks – we say more than we can write
- Fit for purpose (codified) knowledge sharing technology such as SharePoint and Gateway (support collaborative working, smart searching, portfolio data, institutional memory)
- Complying with MPPs

Our ET Journey

- What do you remember from our previous two years of ET?
- Use the sticky wall to chart your journey so far…

Explaining ET

- Imagine you are meeting USAID staff regarding your project funding submission.
- You are asked, "What is evaluative thinking? Why is it important to us and to our beneficiaries?"
- In pairs, prepare a 1-minute response using words that you know will be understood by those asking the question.
- Share in plenary.

What is Evaluative Thinking?

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)

Workshop Goals

Your will …

1. Understand the important role of knowledge utilization in decision making
2. Learn about how to read and interpret results
3. Learn about participatory analysis, how to facilitate it and actively support it
4. Understand how using results to make decisions relates to prior knowledge of ET
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

Your will leave this workshop with …

1. Visualizations of your MEAL results
2. Well thought out and articulated options for possible action plans
3. Strategies to address barriers to ET

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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…"

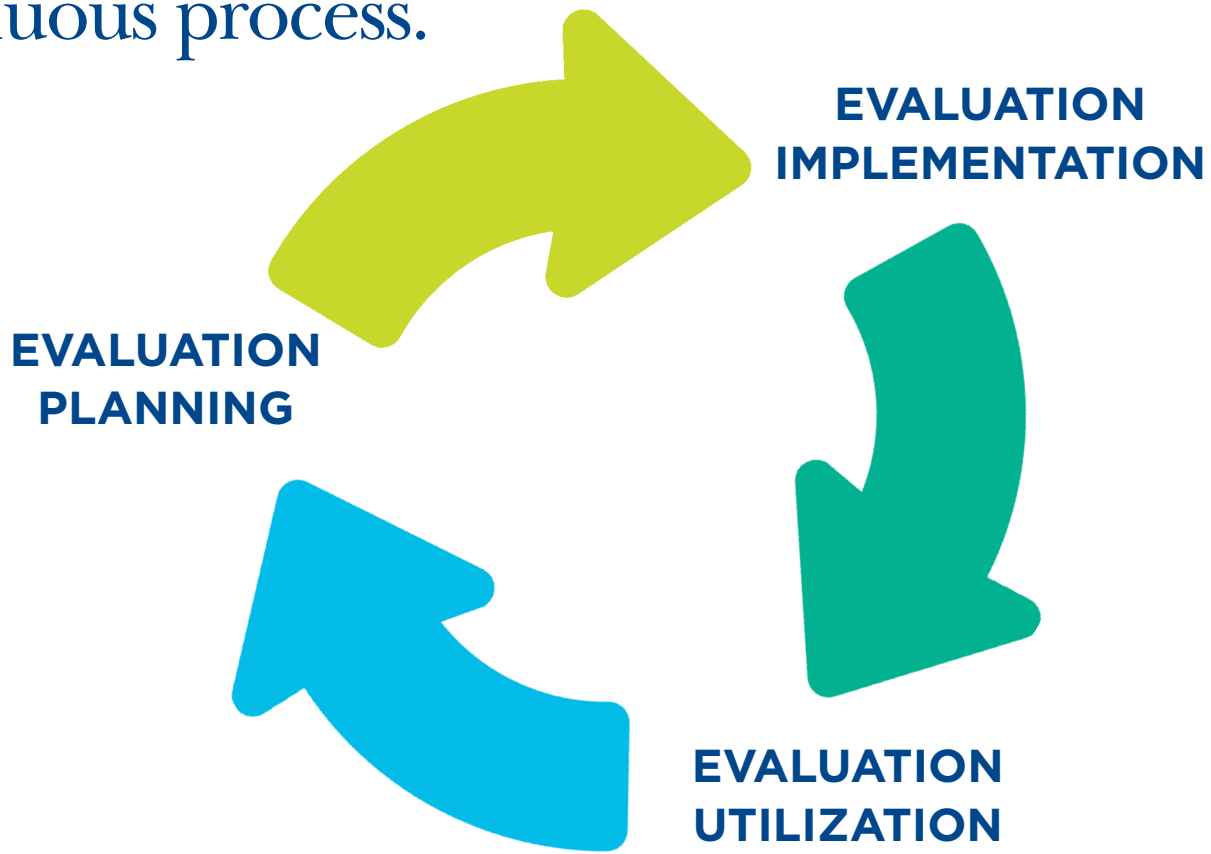
1. Jot down a couple of ideas for yourself.
2. Share: As we go around the room, select one goal to share that has not been shared by someone else.

Agenda Day 1

Time	Task
8:30am	Introductions and goals, consent form, pre-workshop survey
9:15am	ET and utilization
10:00am	Primary intended users
10:30am	Break
10.45am	Practice reading results (Case study)
12:15pm	Lunch
1:15pm	Practice interpretation (Case study)
3:00pm	Break
3:15pm	Review action planning, Practice action planning (Case study)
4:30pm	Reflect and debrief, post-workshop survey
5:00pm	Close

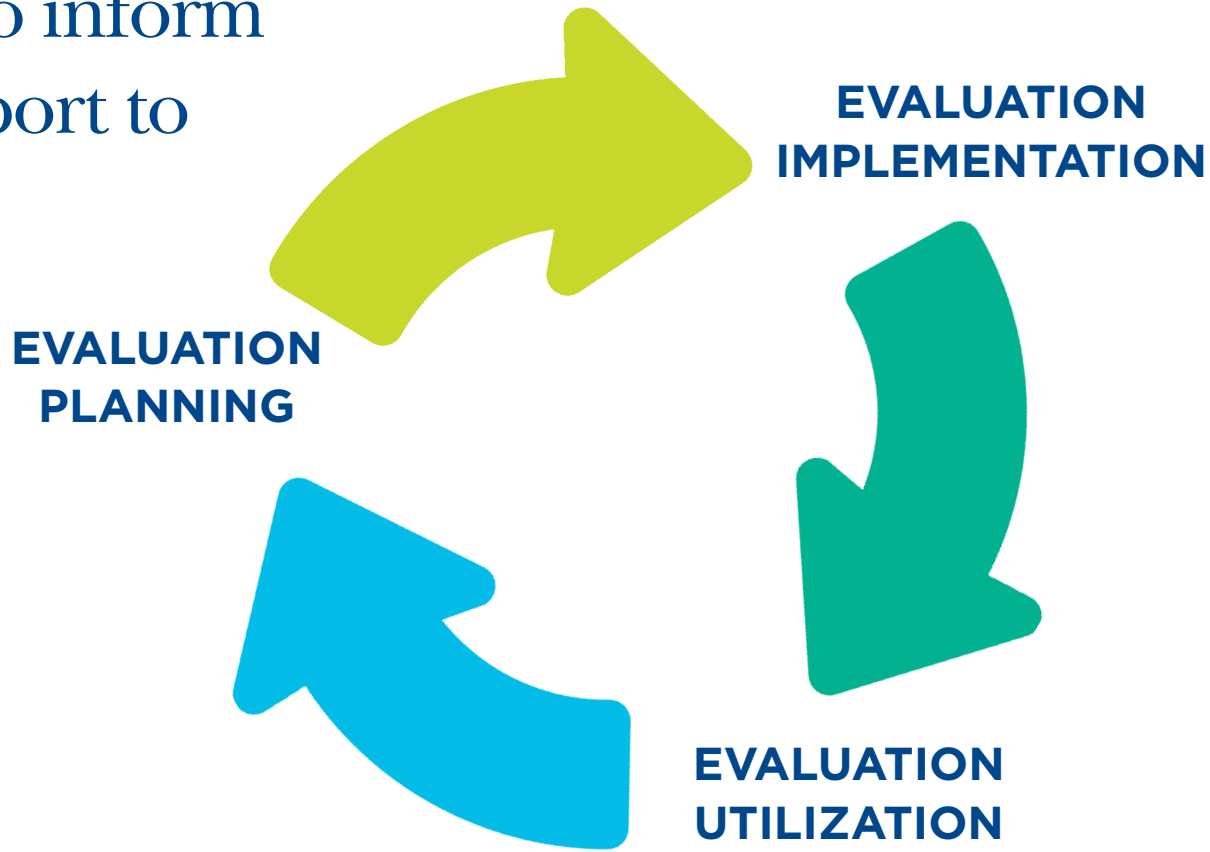
ET and Utilization

MEAL is a continuous process.



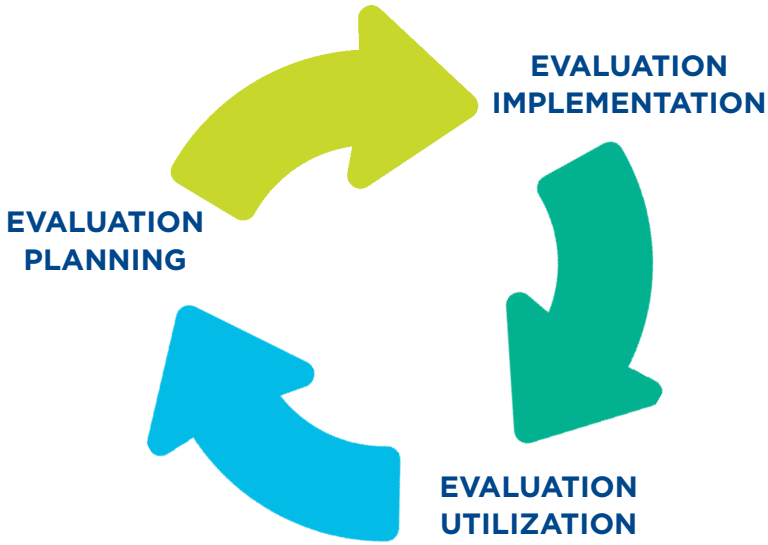
ET and Utilization

Using evidence to inform decisions and report to stakeholders.



Utilization

- Utilization is *rare*. In fact, lack of utilization may be the Number 1 problem we face in the world of social programs
- Why? Because often the information we choose to collect is not useful. Also, change is hard!



HANDOUT

What is Evaluative Thinking?

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
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(BUCKLEY, ARCHIBALD, HARGRAVES & TROCHIM, 2015)

What does utilization look like?

1. Learning discussions with community members
2. Learning-to-action discussions with program staff and leadership
3. Participatory analysis (interpretive and learning-to-action discussions with a variety of stakeholders)

Simple scenario

A community health program conducts an annual group interview with young women from their participating villages. During the interview, the young women report that they are not attending school because of lack of access to latrines. Program staff report this to senior staff and leadership, but no immediate change is made.

- Why might senior staff choose not to make a change?
- What information is missing?
- What action could local staff take?

Talking about data

Photo of: Gender Analysis- CRS Ethiopia

Just having a group discussion doesn't mean ET is happening

1. Focus on the content of a group discussion
   Discuss: What are the minimum conditions for critical or evaluative discussion?

2. Focus on the process of a group discussion
   Discuss: What are the minimum conditions for critical or evaluative discussion?

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When the focus is on the content of the discussion…

1. The prime focus is on members identifying different types of assumptions – their own, their colleagues', partners', donors', community members', etc.
2. Having identified assumptions, they focus on the degree to which these assumptions are accurate and valid.
3. Discussion then tries to fix the contextual validity of an assumption – situations where it is appropriate.
4. Uncovering evidence for any generalizations.
5. Group members encourage as many different perspectives as possible.
6. Members alert to the risk of 'groupthink' and avoid early consensus.

When the focus is on the process of the discussion…

1. Structures are in place to ensure that everyone is given a chance to contribute.
2. Time limits prevent individuals from dominating.
3. The group is comfortable with periods of reflective silence seen as important for critical thought.
4. Group members look for similarities and differences in individual contributions.
5. Power constantly moves around the group. No one automatically takes center stage.
6. Every time a new idea is introduced, members look for examples to illustrate its relevance.
7. Members regard active listening to each other as the most key element of good communication.

What is being used?

When we talk about “data,” “results” and “feedback” we need to be talking about all formats and types of information.

Participatory Utilization

Interpretations and explanations differ depending on perspective, interest and personal knowledge. By equitably considering all perspectives, we give ourselves the best chance of making the "right" decision and propelling the program forward.

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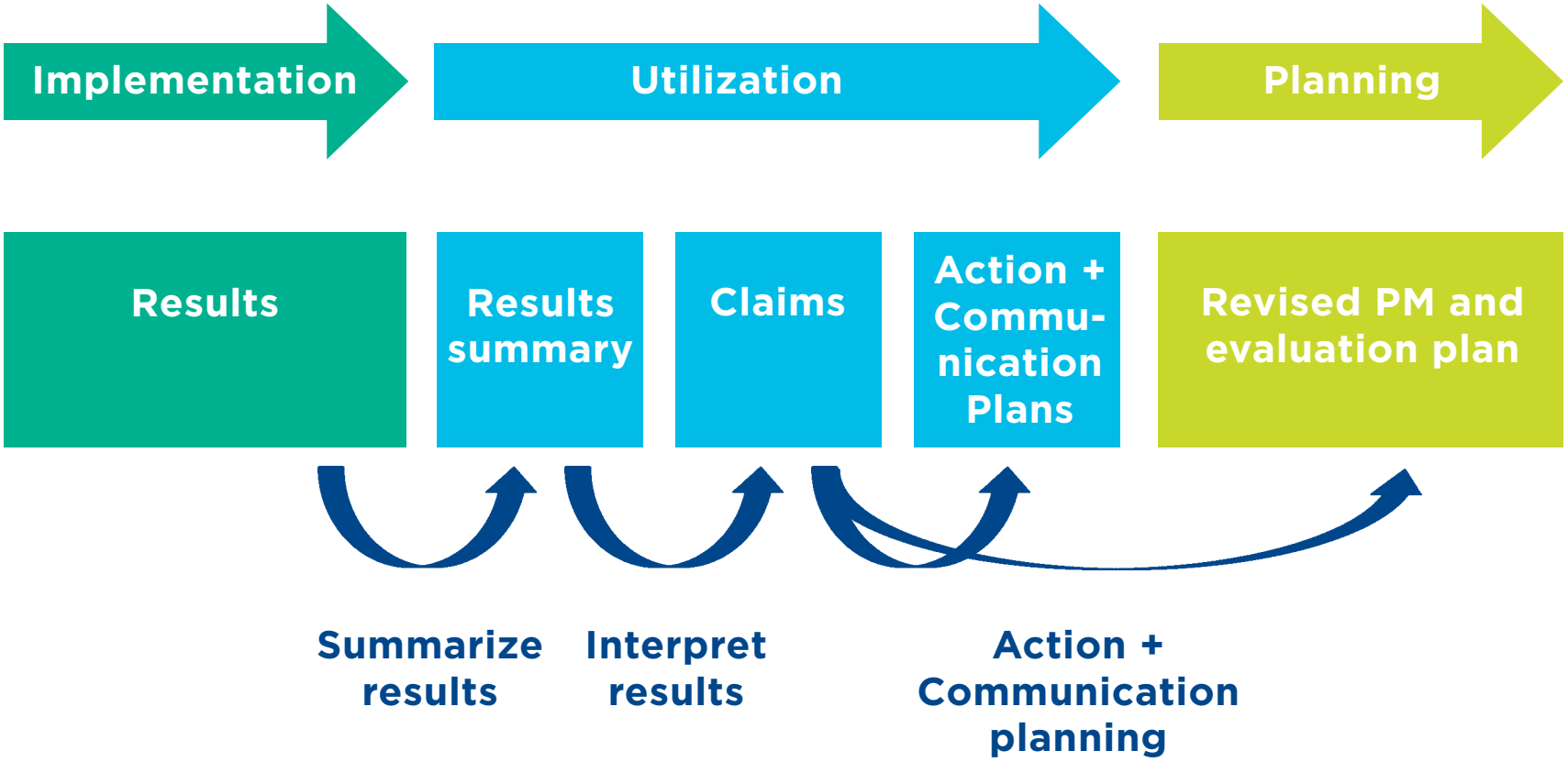
Participatory Utilization

In your work context, what are the challenges to "equitably considering all perspectives?"

The 3 Steps in Utilization

1. **Summarizing results –** put data into an unbiased, interpretable form
2. **Interpretation –** make meaning from and/or explain results and determine their significance
3. **Action and communication planning –** make careful decisions and thoughtful plans about what to do with any new information

Utilization



The 3 Steps in Utilization

1. **Summarizing results –** Three of my friends say this is a good place to get lunch
2. **Interpretation –** The chances are good (though not guaranteed) that I will like it too
3. **Action and communication planning –** I will try this place the next time I am out

The 3 Steps in Utilization

1. **Result summary** – Crop yield in the study site high tunnels increased by an average of 30% with a range from 2% to 53%.

2. **Interpretation** – Though we may be able to attribute some increases in crop yield to the use of high tunnels, we can't be sure. No claim will be made at this time.

3. **Action plan** – I will seek more information about the use of high tunnels in my particular location.

The 3 Steps in Utilization

At your table, come up with your own example…

Home-related

or

Work-related

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Primary Intended Users

- Who cares about your results and/or new information?
- Who might act or make decisions based on these results/information?

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Stakeholders as users of information

How might each of these stakeholder groups use results differently?

ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION

HANDOUT

Primary Intended Users Brainstorm

Debrief

- How did this activity change your perspective on how you might use your MEAL results (if at all)?
- Did your team have general agreement about who the primary intended users are? Why?
- How does this activity contribute to evaluative thinking?

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Break

Summarizing Results

- Be objective
- Prepare for interpretation
- Align to learning questions
- How many different ways could we summarize the "data" about who is in the room today?

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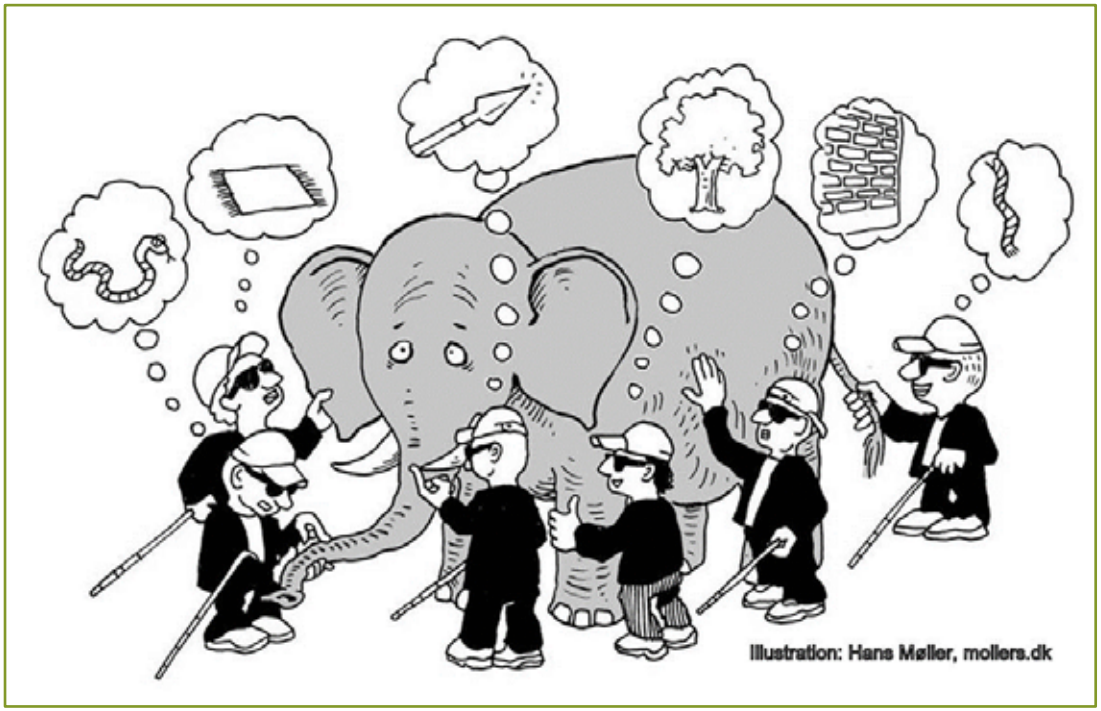
Being Objective

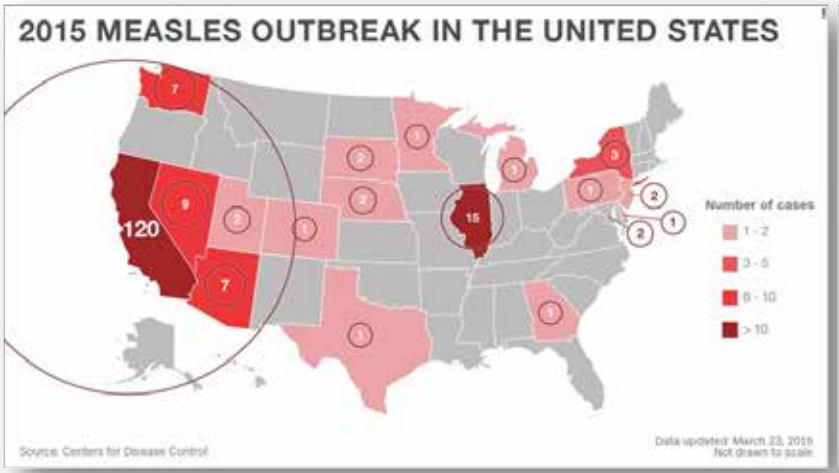
In plenary…

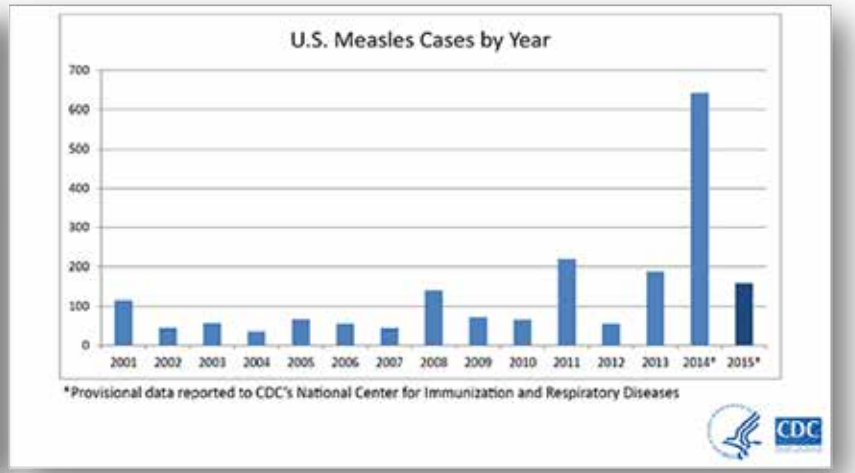
- What does it mean to be objective?
- Why is it important to be objective when it comes to summarizing MEAL results?



Being Objective

Were the people who summarized this result being objective? Why/why not?





Being Objective

In your table groups…

Consider the following stakeholders. Then, rank them in terms of the value of their perspective when interpreting results:

- Community member/participant
- Project manager
- MEAL advisor
- Head of programs in country program
- Community partner
- Field supervisor
- Project technical lead

Why did you rank these stakeholder the way you did?

Why would/wouldn't you consider them all equally?

Prepare for Interpretation ("OCTEV")

Organize – Sort, list, or tabulate the data

Clean – Address missing and/or erroneous data

Translate – Score, code, or otherwise convert the data

Enumerate – Count up the data when appropriate

Visualize – Display data in a way that allows for interpretation

Case Study

WALA, Malawi, 2011

Familiarize yourself with the case study and read Part I

Materials have been edited and summarized for the purpose of practicing utilization-related skills

A. Prepare for Interpretation

For this activity, you will not need to do the "O", "C" or "T" steps. Use the simple case study data set (Part IV, but refer also to Part III) to do the following:

- **Enumerate –** Count up the data when appropriate
- **Visualize –** Display data in a way that allows for interpretation

Debrief

- Was this activity more or less difficult than you expected? Why?
- Was it easy or hard to remain objective? Why?
- What is the role of ET in this work?
- What will this step look like for your own MEAL work?

ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION

HANDOUT

B. Align Results with LQs

- Sometimes a result addresses more than one question OR a different one of your LQs than was originally intended
- Sometimes a result doesn't address any of your LQs
- Sometimes a result answers a LQ that you didn't ask

When you see data, it is easy to imagine all of the ways you could use it… But recall all of the work you did to select your LQs, the resources you have and you primary intended users.

ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION

HANDOUT

B. Align Results with LQs

Match a learning question number (in Part II) to each Result (in Part V)

Debrief

- Was it easy or hard to sort the results? Why?
- Do you think the results are sufficient to address the learning questions?
- Did you use ET to do this activity? If so, how?

OCTEV Resources

Data Analysis Process (MPP 2.1)

Steps for Data Cleaning (Food Security Network)

Visualization of Evaluation Data (USAID)

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Lunch

Interpretive Frameworks

Data Analysis Process (MPP 2.1)

Steps for Data Cleaning (Food Security Network)

Visualization of Evaluation Data (USAID)

Interpretive Frameworks

Interpretive Frameworks

Every individual sees results and information through a different "frame," depending on their own experience, personality, perspective on their program, etc.
They might tend to be:

- Positive, negative or neutral
- Defensive or open

They might see results as:

- Expected or unexpected

What do you think your own interpretive framework tends to be?

ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION

HANDOUT

Interpretive Frameworks Role-play

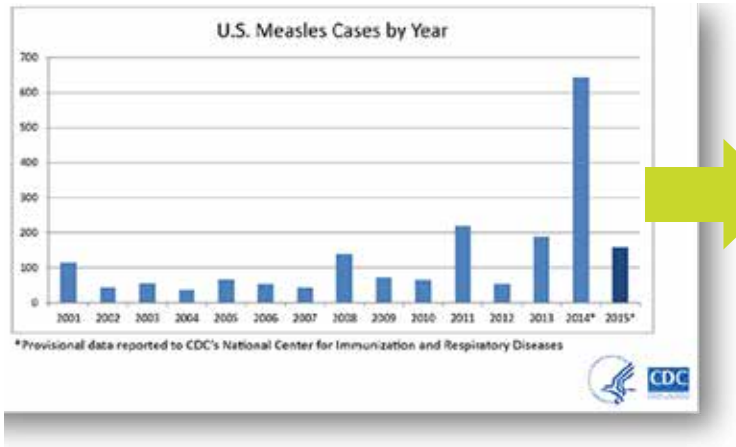
Have each member of your group select one of the following frameworks:

- **Positive** (see results in a positive light – "yellow hat")
- **Negative** (see results in a negative light – "black hat")
- **Defensive** (feel offense, deny accuracy of results)
- **Open** (do not feel offended, see results as plausible)
- **Expected** (not at all surprised by the results)
- **Unexpected** (surprised by the results)

Debrief

- How did it feel to take on a different interpretive framework?
- Did this exercise offer an insight about your own interpretive framework?
- How does this activity contribute to ET?
- What other interpretive frameworks might exist? Political, naïve, streetwise, etc.

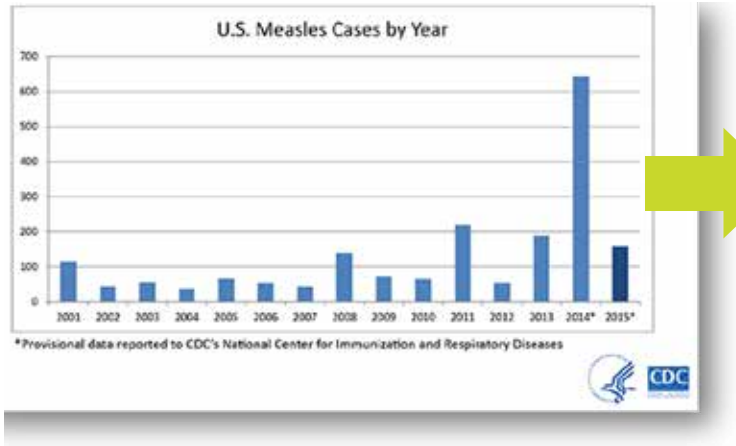
C. Align Results with Claims



What was the number of measles cases in the US in 2015?

The number of measles cases in the US decreased between 2014 and 2015.

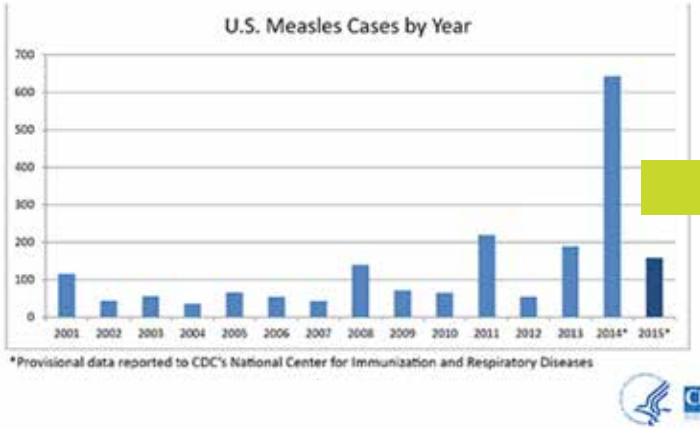
What is the problem here?

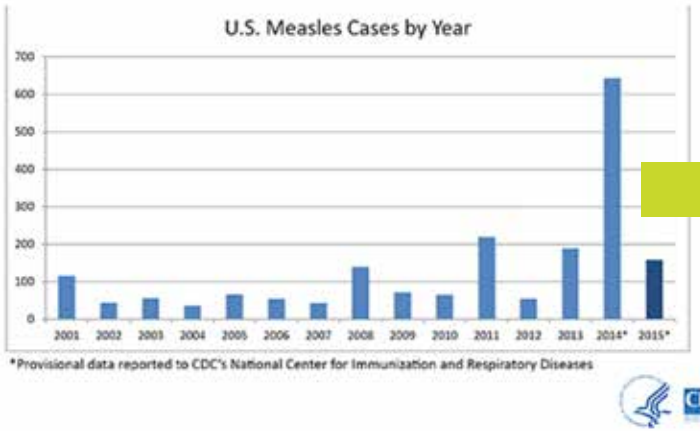


Did the number of measles cases in the US change between 2014 and 2015?

There were 150 cases of measles in the US in 2015.

C. Align Results with Claims





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The number of measles cases in the US decreased between 2014 and 2015.

Did the number of measles cases in the US change between 2014 and 2015?

There were 150 cases of measles in the US in 2015.

C. Align Results with Claims

Claims are statements you make about your results.

They should be:

- Supported by your results/evidence
- Directly related to your learning questions
- Accurate

They might be:

- Different from the claims you expected to make

ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION

HANDOUT

C. Align Results with Claims

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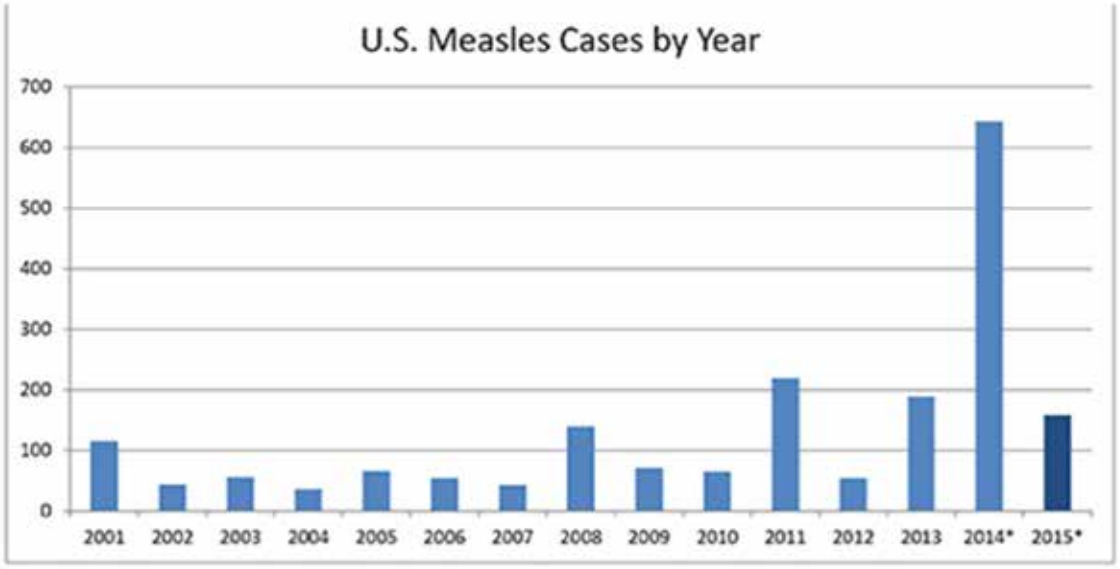
Debrief

- Was is hard to accurately make claims based on your (simulated) results? Why or why not?
- Was it hard to stick to claims related to your learning questions?
- How did ET contribute to your ability to do this activity?

Plausible Alternative Explanations

Now for the fun part…

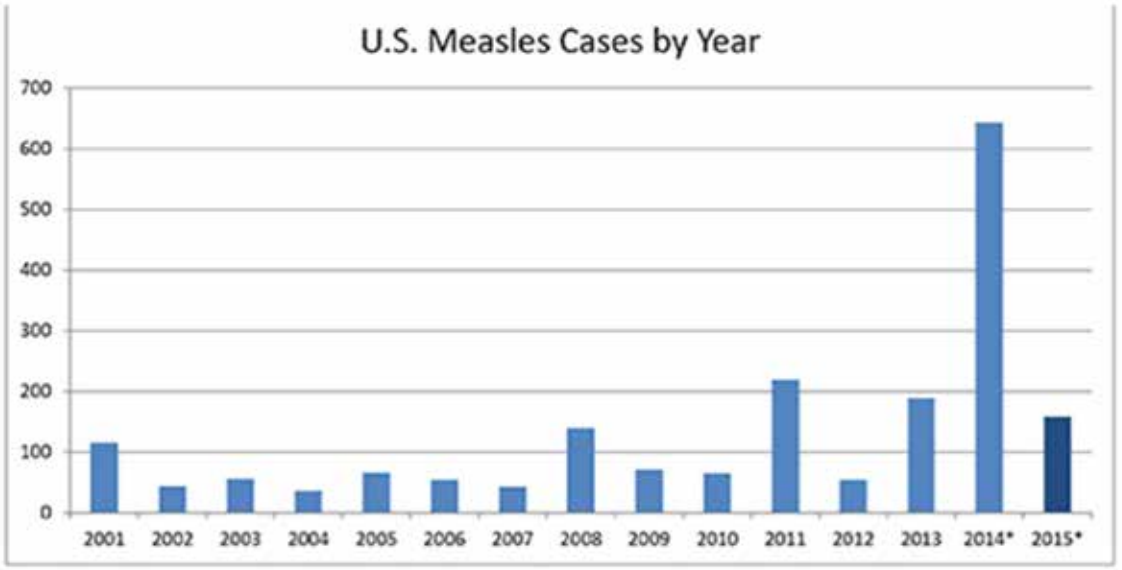
WHY?



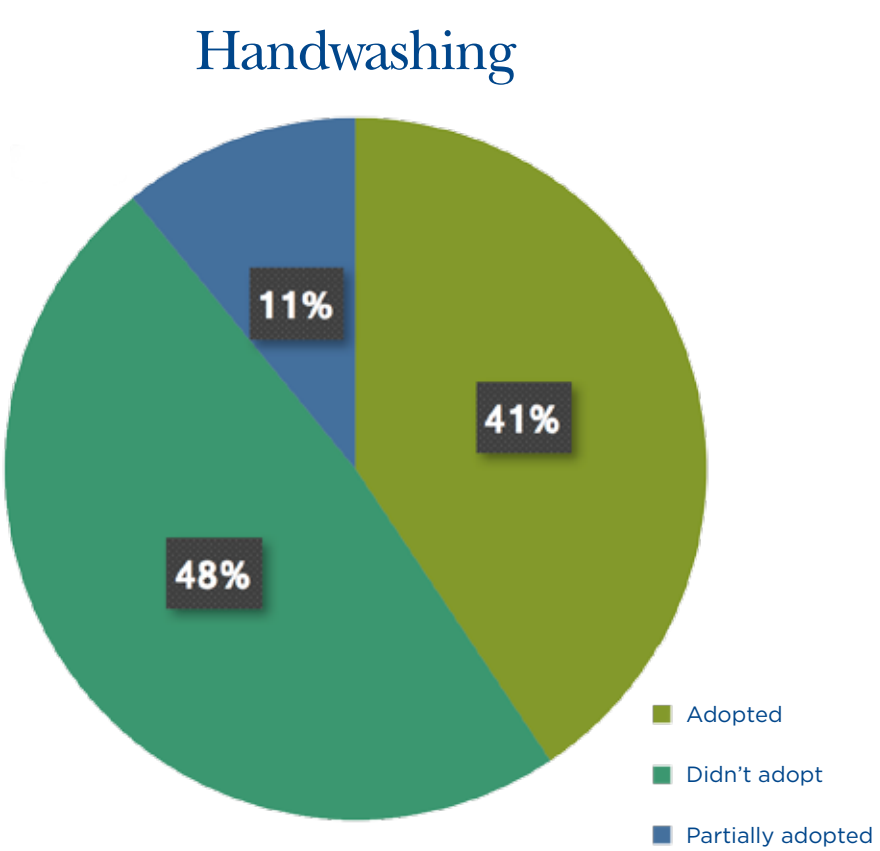
Plausible Alternative Explanations

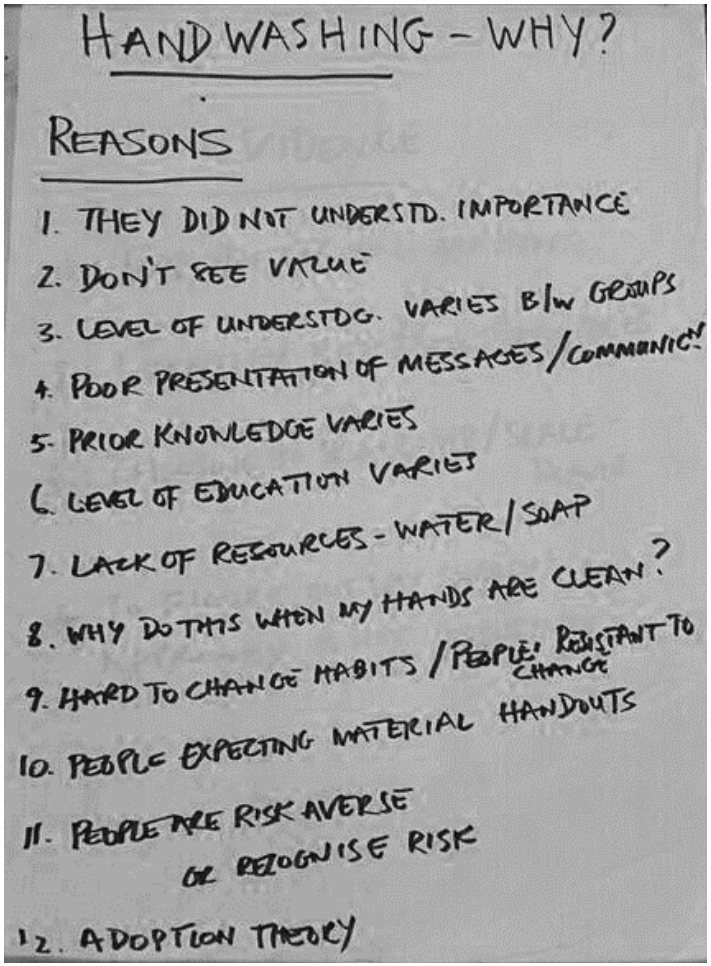
There are more possible explanations than you think…

Can you think of more than three explanations for this result?



Plausible Alternative Explanations





ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION

Plausible Alternative Explanations

Case study (Part V in Handout)

Interpret Summarized Results (HO)

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ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION

HANDOUT

D. Interpret Summarized Results

Case study (Part V in Handout)

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Debrief

- Was it difficult to come up with more alternatives?
- Is this something you would typically do in everyday life? Why or why not?
- What role does evaluative thinking play in this exercise?

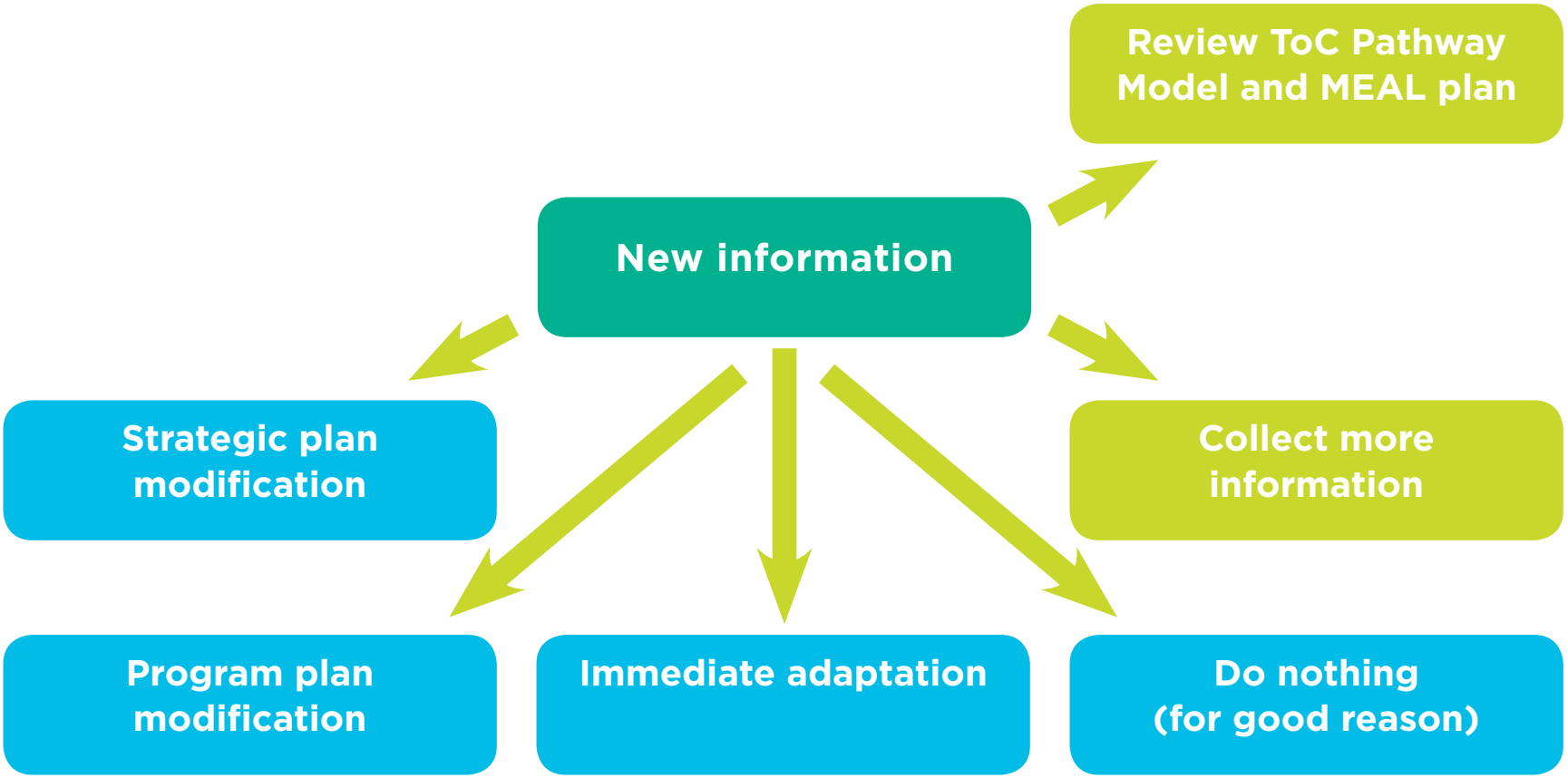
Break

Action Plan

- ✓ Summarized results
- ✓ Interpreted results (claims and explanations)
- ✓ Reviewed ToC, MEAL plan and program plan

Now what do we do?

Action Options



Action Options

Do nothing	Immediate adaptation	Program plan modification	Strategic plan modification	Collect more information*
Evidence suggests that you are on the right track. There is no evidence to support any change. You need to wait until you have more information before you decide to make a change.	There is sufficient evidence to make a (small) change. The suggested change is low-risk. The suggested change does not significantly interfere with current (or planned) MEAL work.	There is sufficient evidence to made a plan modification. There is evidence to support the suggested change. The need for change justifies interference with current MEAL work / MEAL plan modification.	There is significant evidence that the current program plan is ineffective. There is evidence to support an alternative strategic plan. Continuing with the current strategy would be a waste of resources.	Your results are unreliable (do again). Your results lead you to a new question. You are ready to "move to the right" on your Pathway Model. ** Always do this*

Action Plan

Your action plan should include:

- ✓ A description of the part(s) of the program you are addressing
- ✓ The change (or no change) you are suggesting
- ✓ The evidence you have to support your decision
- ✓ The evidence if any) you have to support your suggested alternative
- ✓ A description of the MEAL work you suggest

NOTE: You may suggest different actions for different parts/ aspects of the program

ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION

HANDOUT

E. Action Plan

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Debrief

- Was this exercise harder than you expected? Why or why not?
- What role did ET play in your decision-making process?
- When you were considering the evidence for your decision, what made you feel that the evidence was sufficient (or insufficient)?

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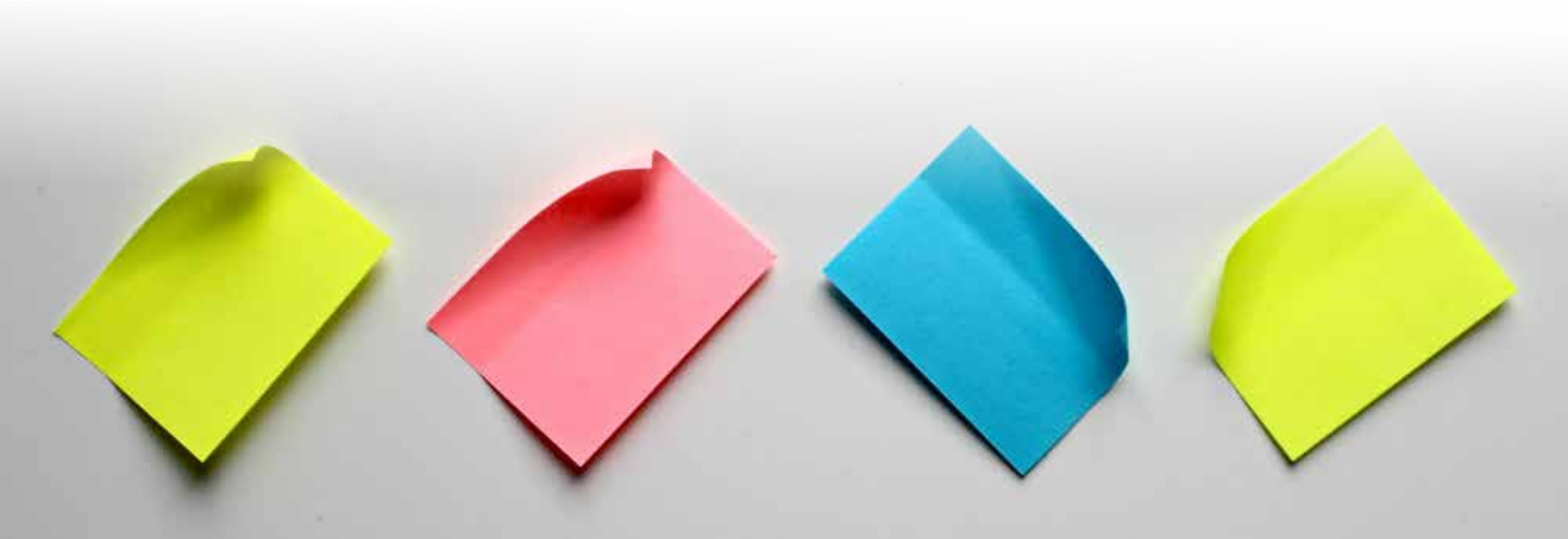
Any Questions?

- If you have any questions about what we talked about today that you would like us to address tomorrow, please write them on Post-it notes and stick them to the chart paper on your way out.



Today's Handouts

- Consent Form
- ET Pre-Workshop Survey
- ET Defined
- Primary Intended Users Brainstorm
- Case study
- Case study: Prepare for Interpretation
- Interpretive Framework Role-play
- Case study: Align Results with Claims
- Case study: Interpret Summarized Results
- Case study: Action Plan

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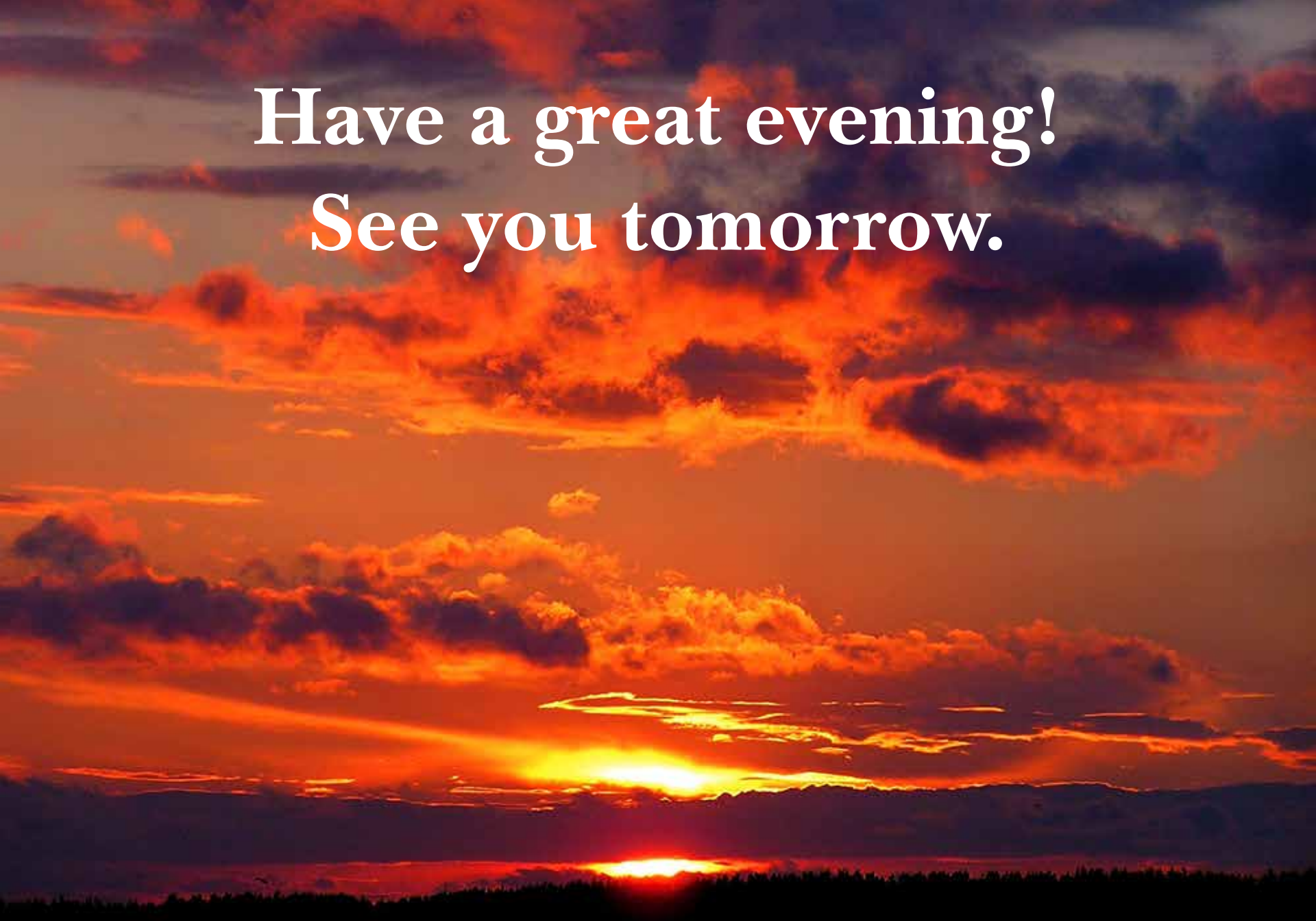
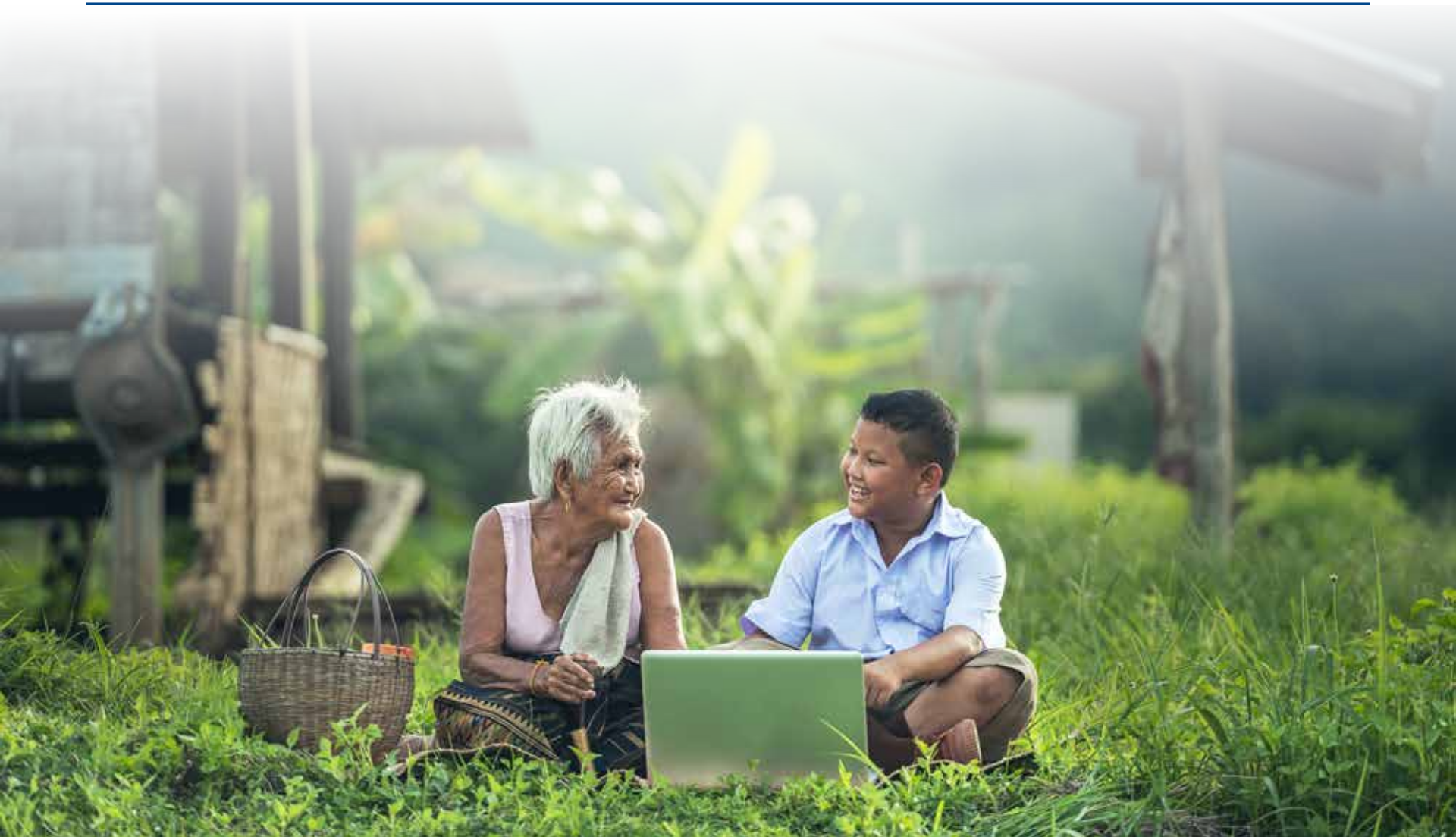

Have a great evening!
See you tomorrow.

Agenda Day 2

Time	Task
8:30am	Debrief of Day 1, goals for Day 2
9:00am	Introduction to redefining reporting
10:15am	Break
10:30am	Create a communication plan, MEAL report critical review
12:00pm	Lunch
1:00pm	Program learning in your context
3:00pm	Break
3:15pm	Two universal uses: ToC Pathway Model and MEAL plan
4:30pm	Reflect and debrief, post-workshop survey
5:00pm	Close

Redefining Reporting

Committing to Communication



Committing to Communication

To whom?	Why?	What?	How?
Funder	Promote the program, secure additional funding	Complete set of evaluation results	5-page written report (quantities and text)
Internal stakeholders (program staff)	Inform action plans/ program improvements	Results related to program improvement decisions	10-minute Powerpoint (images, quantities and text)
Community	Promote the program (including understanding what it is)	Results that demonstrate the positive impacts of the program (if any)	Flyer (images and minimal text)
Participants	Deepen understanding of the program, solicit interpretations and additional feedback	Results that would most benefit from participant interpretation	Conversations

Recall your primary intended users

ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION

HANDOUT

Design a One-pager

With your group, design a flip chart page for your case study. This page will:

- Have 75 words or less
- Use images and/or figures
- Have a title that clearly summarizes the message
- Be used to communicate results/claims with … choose a primary intended user

Gallery Walk

As you walk around the room, for each flyer, write down:

- Something you like and will work well to communicate with program managers
- Something the team could have left off or changed

Share back

Round robin: Each group presents their feedback to the group to their right.

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Break

ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION

HANDOUT

Communication Plan Outline

Case Study: Communication Plan Outline

Outline:

- Which results you want to communicate
- In what form
- To whom
- For what purpose

Consider:

- Who your primary intended users and stakeholders are and what they need
- Resources and time
- What is best for the community and the program (how best to help the program evolve)

Debrief

- How had your thinking about reporting changed, if at all?
- Why is reporting/communication an important part of program work?
- How does ET contribute to good communication?

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ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION

HANDOUT

MEAL Report Critical Review

- You will review a real evaluation report, created by a program supported by CRS.
- Use the handout provided to guide your critique the content and presentation of this report.

Debrief

- Did reviewing this report make you think any differently about your case study? How about your "real life" program?
- How would you facilitate a critical review of your program's latest report with your program team?

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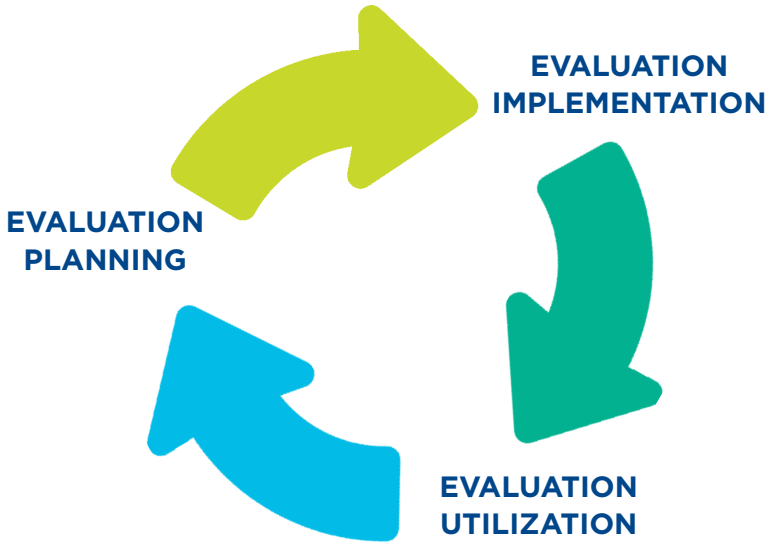
Utilization

- Utilization is *rare*. In fact, lack of utilization may be the Number 1 problem we face in the world of social programs
- Why? Because often the information we choose to collect is not useful. Also, change is hard!

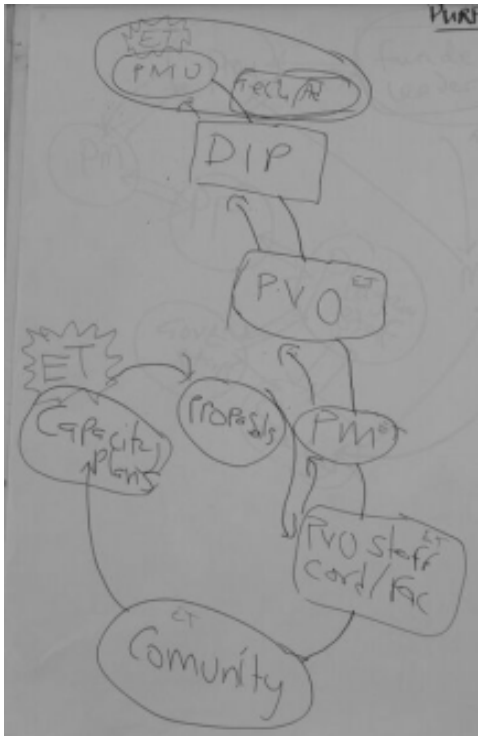


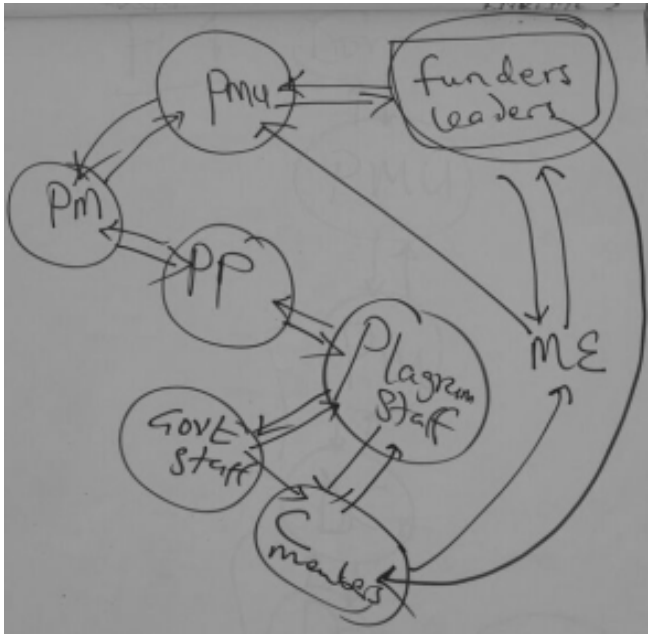
Information Use

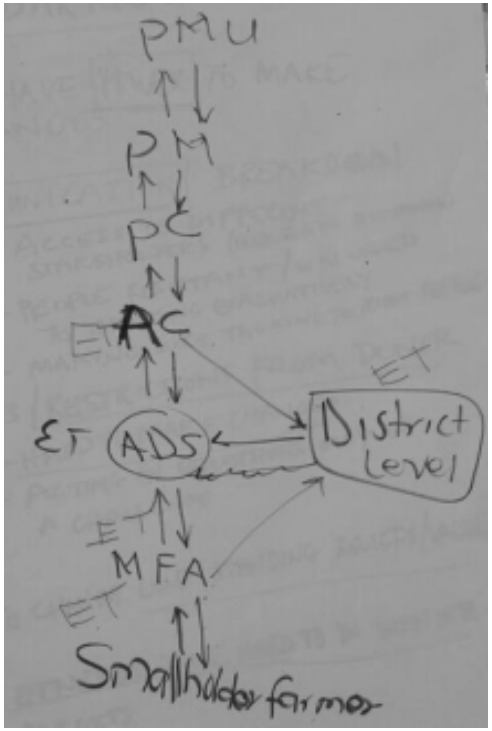
- **Mechanical**: Go through the motions of MEAL to write a report and meet a requirement
- **Conceptual**: Think about or understand something differently, most likely using ET
- **Instrumental**: Using ET to decide whether or not to take action and what action to take

Lunch

Program Learning Systems







ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION

HANDOUT

Program Learning Diagram

- Program staff
- Program managers
- Leadership
- Funders
- Participants
- Stakeholders

- Program plan
- MEAL plan
- Annual report

What?

- Written report
- Flyer
- Presentation
- Discussion

Why?

- Mechanical
- Conceptual
- Instrumental

Share and Discuss

One representative from each group will present (describe) their diagrams to the larger group, including:

- The strengths and weaknesses of their program's current utilization system
- The one area of improvement on their ideal diagram that they would prioritize

Members of the "audience" will offer:

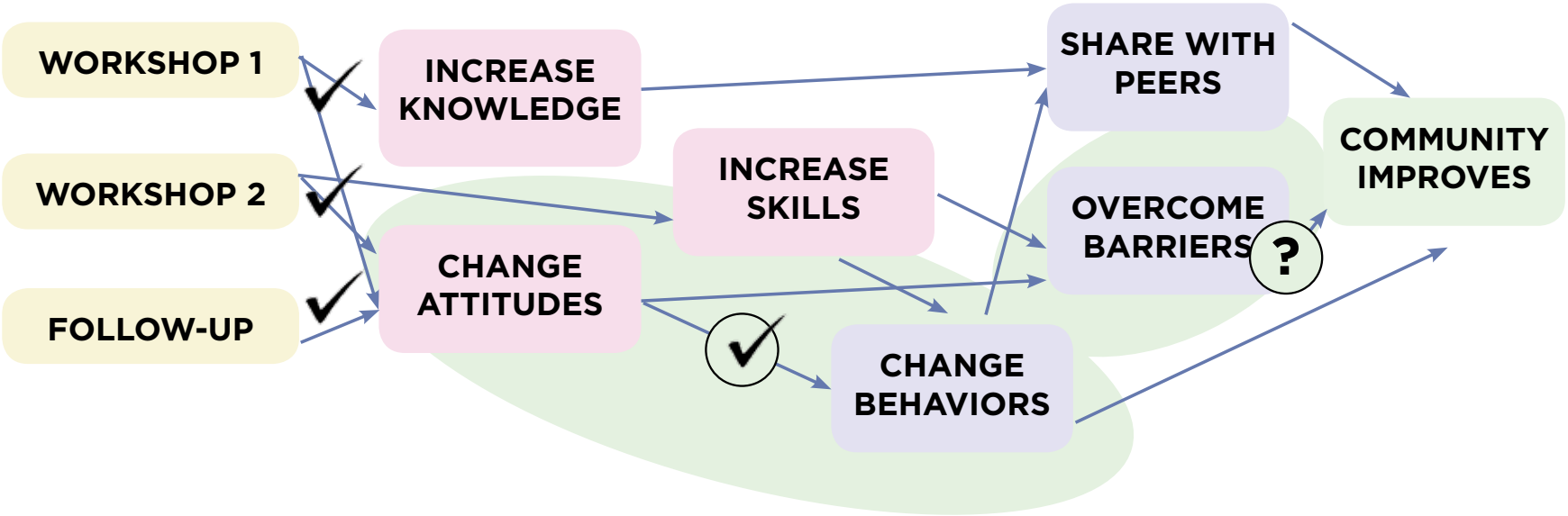
- Thoughtful compliments
- Reflections on what this diagram made them think about their own diagram

Debrief

- Did this activity surface any insights?
- Did your group agree about the “ideal?”
- How would a culture of ET support your ideal utilization system?
- Reflect on what this diagram made you think about your own diagram

Break

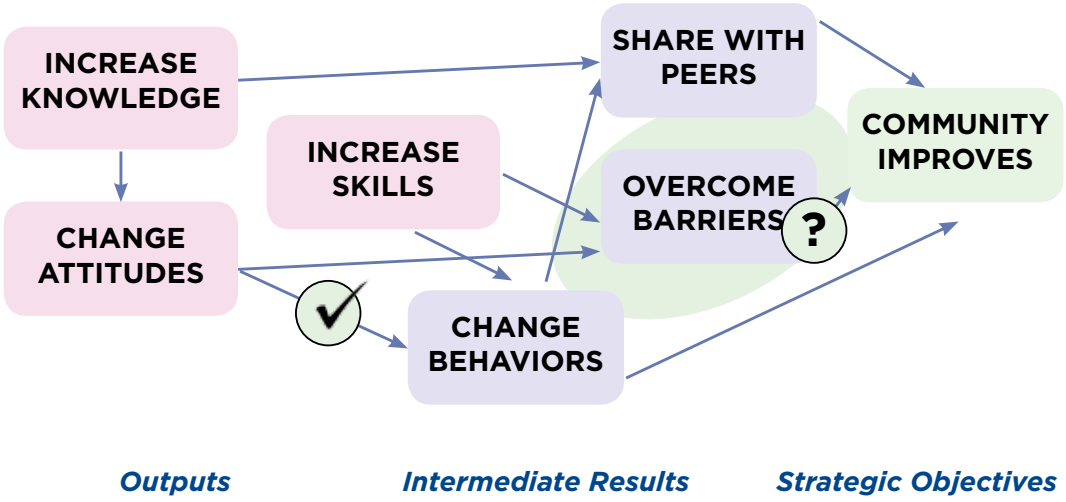
Revisiting the ToC Pathway Model and MEAL Plan



Revisiting the ToC Pathway Model and MEAL Plan

~~LQ: Is there a correlation between a change in attitude and change in behavior among our participants?~~

LQ: Are our participants, who have changed their behavior able to overcome the barriers to sustaining this behavior?



Revisiting the ToC Pathway Model and MEAL Plan

ToC Pathway Model

- Have any of the activities changed?
- Has your thinking about outcomes changed?
- Does the evidence you've collected suggest that you should add or remove nodes and/or links?

MEAL Plan

- Does the evidence you've collected adequately address your learning questions?
- If not, do you need to change your measurement strategy?
- If yes, what is the next question that you need to ask?

ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION

Revisit the ToC Pathway Model and Learning Questions

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Any Questions?

Today's Handouts

- Design a One-Pager
- Communication Plan Outline
- MEAL Report Critical Review
- Program Learning Diagram

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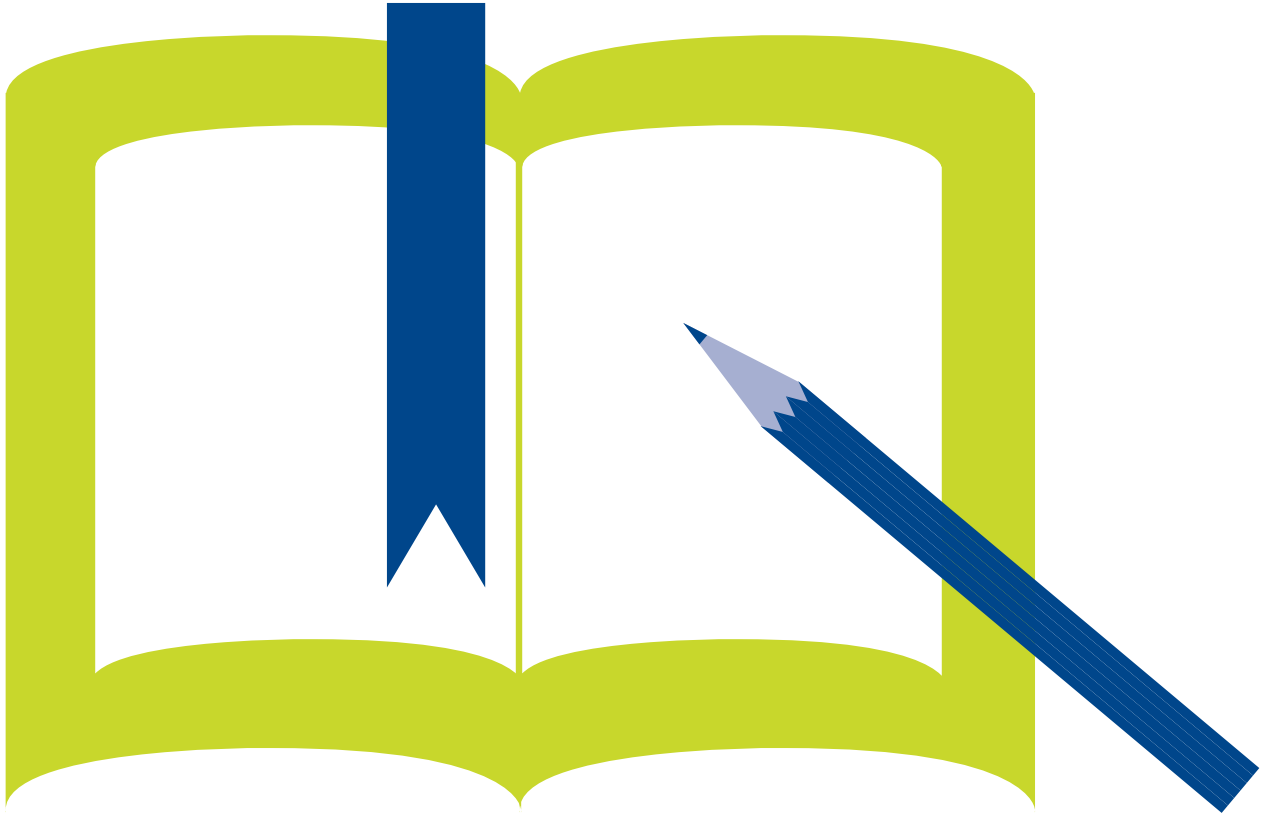
Organizing your ET notebook



Organizing your ET notebook

Day 1 Handouts	Day 2 Handouts
Consent form	Design a one-pager
Pre-workshop survey	Communication plan outline
What is evaluative thinking?	MEAL report critical review
Primary intended users brainstorm	Program learning diagram
Case study (Appendix)	Post-workshop survey
Case study: Prepare for interpretation	
Interpretive frameworks role-play	
Case study: Align results with claims	
Case study: Interpret summarized results	
Case study: Action plan	

HANDOUT

Post-Workshop Survey

- Please fill out the Post-Workshop Survey


Thank You!

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