# Program Evaluation for Social Justice

RACHEL VOTH SCHRAG, PHD LCSW

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT ARLINGTON

RACHEL.VOTHSCHRAG@UTA.EDU

# Agenda

- o Introduction(s)
  - o Who Are We
  - o Program evaluation: A <relatively> Quick Primer

- o What is evaluation for social justice?
  - o Why might it be good for my agency?
  - o Impact On Our Terms

- o Break

- o How does evaluation for social justice work?

- o Tools, Techniques, and Strategies

- o Practice!

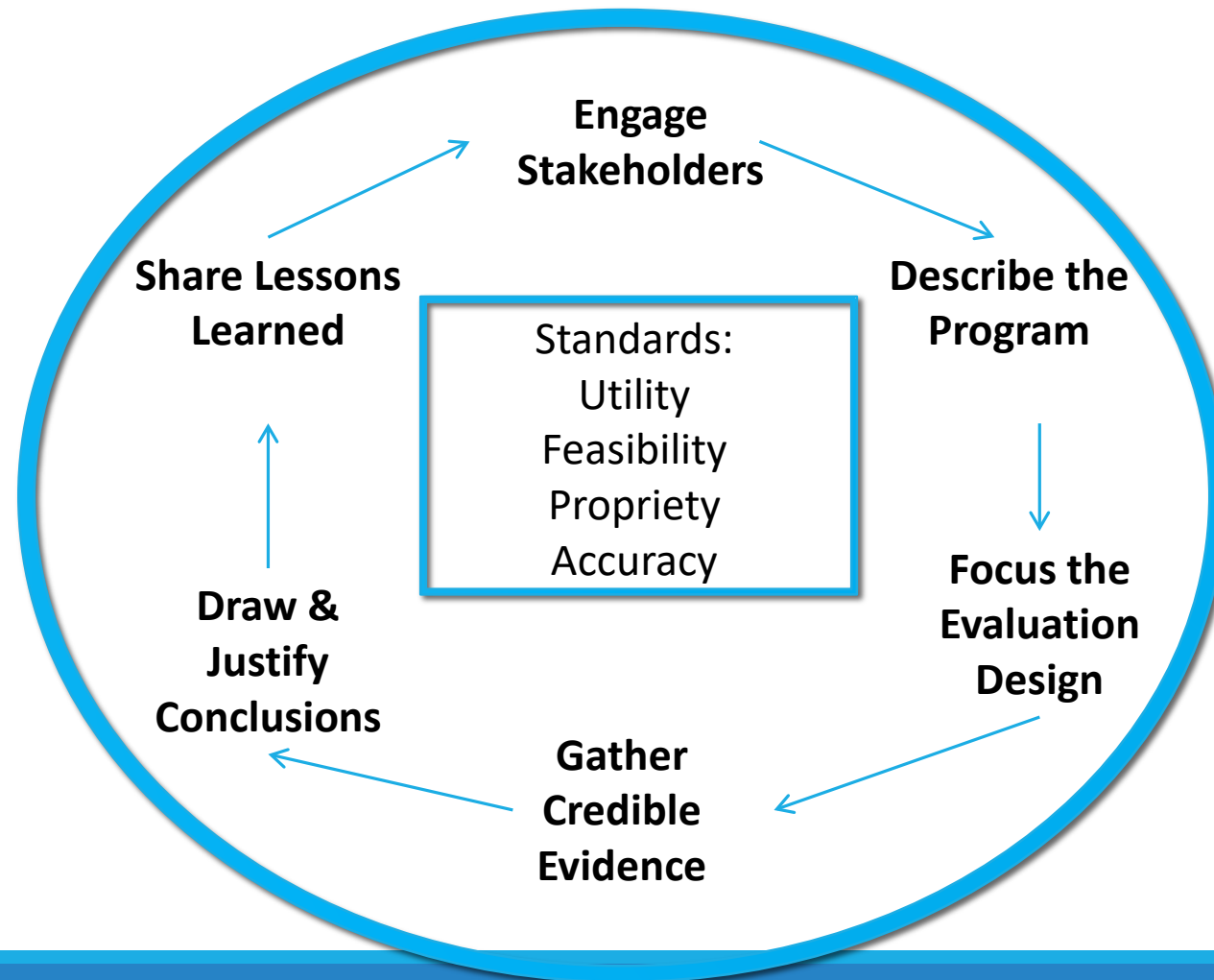- o A Final Caveat

- o Resources

# Introductions

## Who am I?

## Who are you?
◦ What evaluation challenges are you facing in your current context?
◦ What do you hope to get out of this workshop?
   ◦ (What would make it worth having skipped some beach time?)
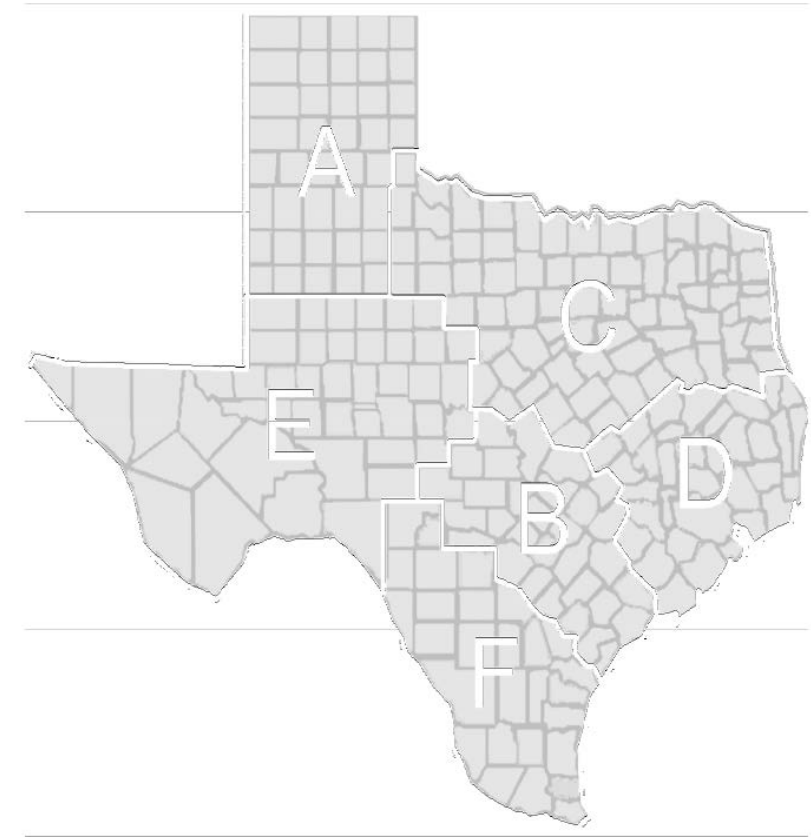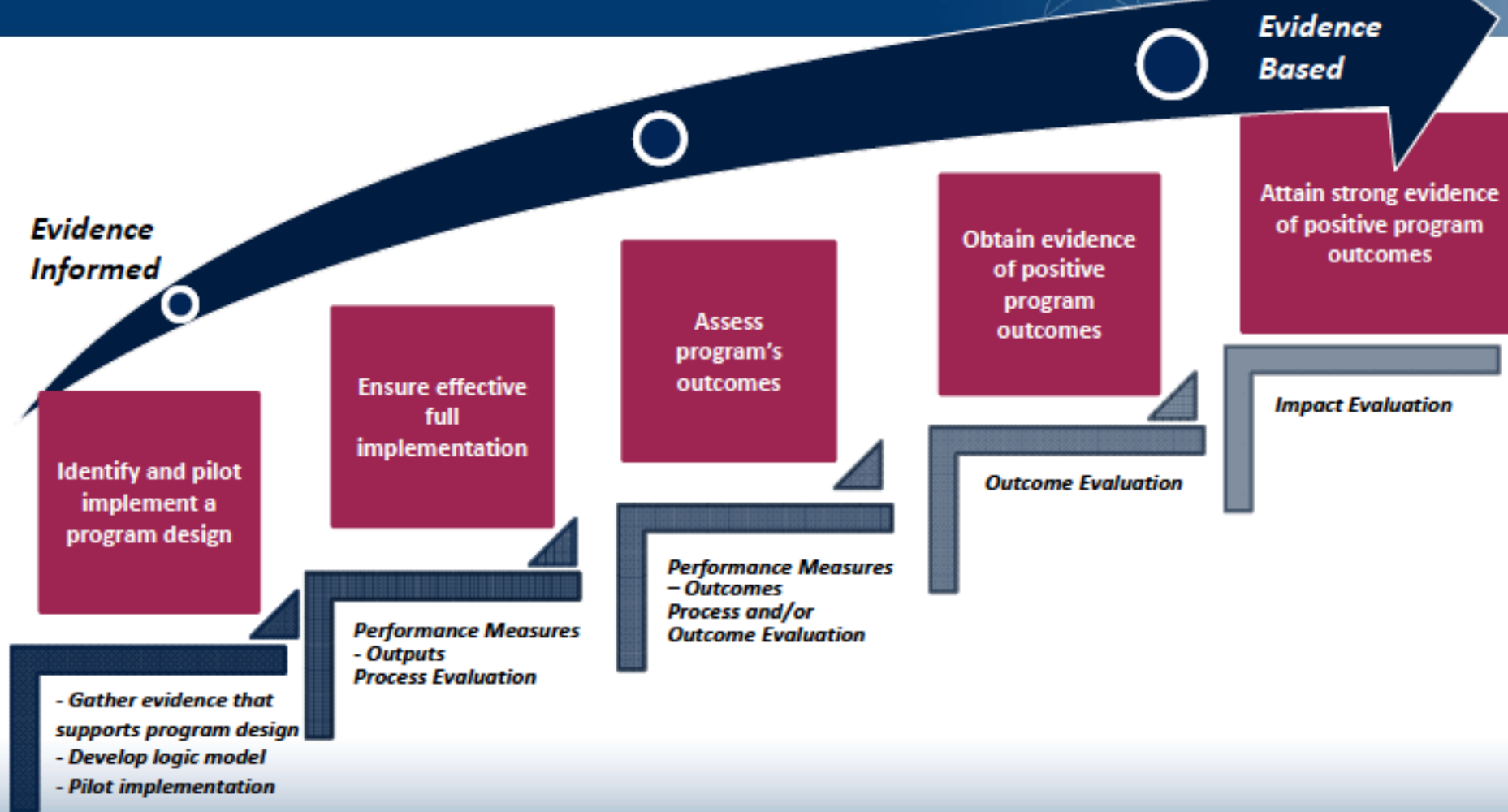
# The CDC's Evaluation Cycle

# Why do we evaluate?

# Building Evidence of Effectiveness



*Evidence Based*

*Evidence Informed*

Attain strong evidence of positive program outcomes

Obtain evidence of positive program outcomes

Assess program's outcomes

Ensure effective full implementation

Identify and pilot implement a program design

*Impact Evaluation*

*Outcome Evaluation*

*Performance Measures – Outcomes Process and/or Outcome Evaluation*

*Performance Measures - Outputs Process Evaluation*

*- Gather evidence that supports program design*
*- Develop logic model*
*- Pilot implementation*

Corporation for NATIONAL & COMMUNITY SERVICE ★★★
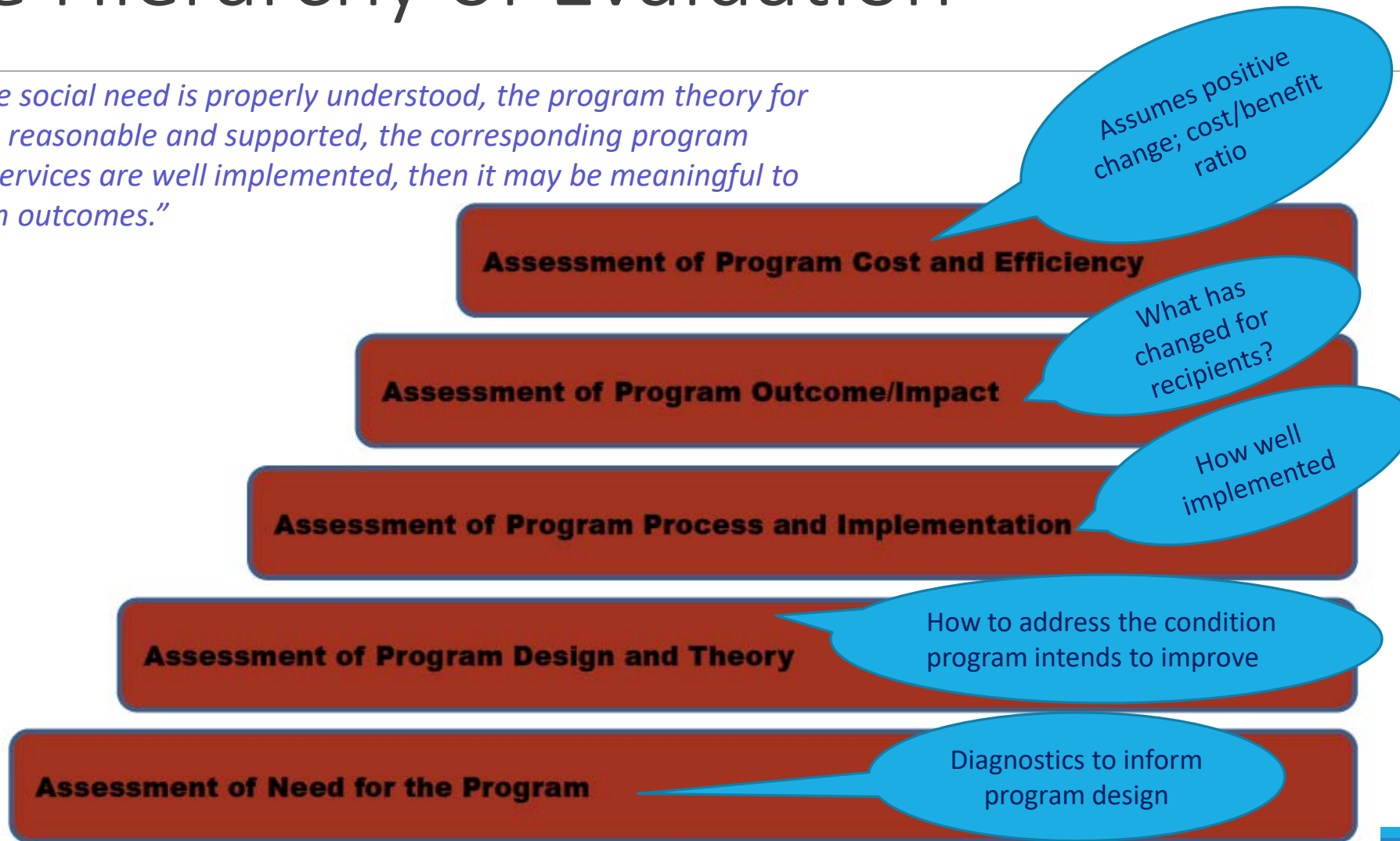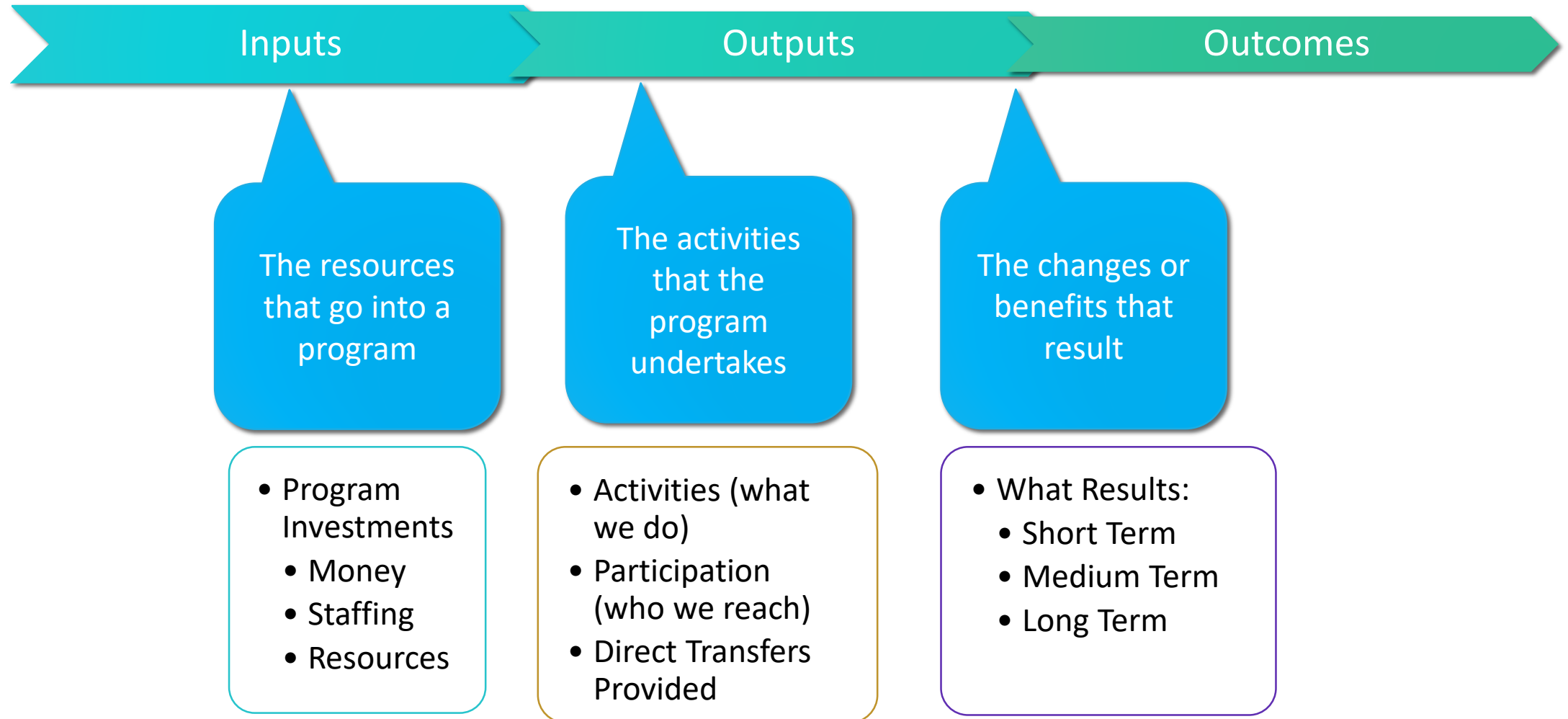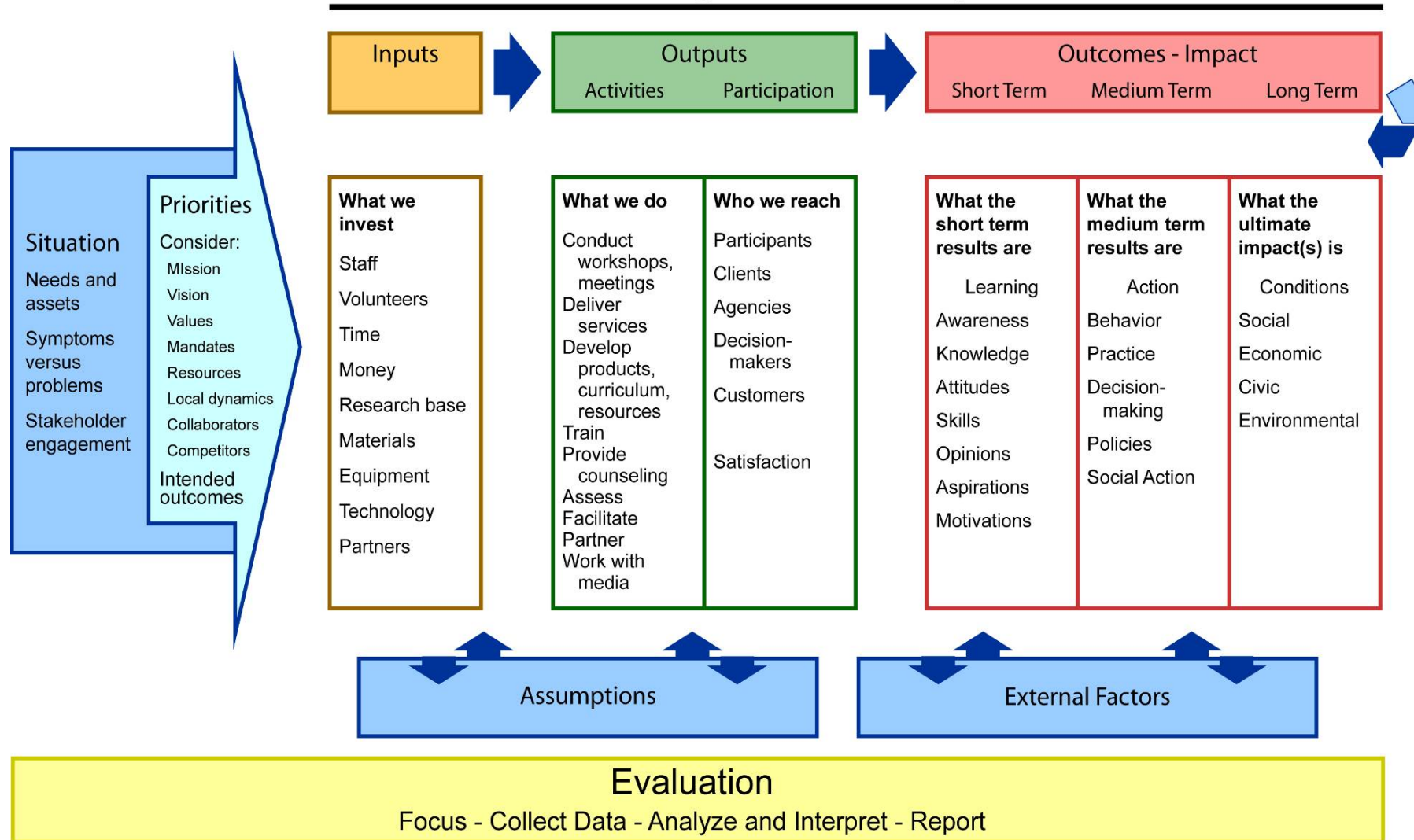
# The Hierarchy of Evaluation

*"If we know the social need is properly understood, the program theory for addressing it is reasonable and supported, the corresponding program activities and services are well implemented, then it may be meaningful to assess program outcomes."*



**Assessment of Program Cost and Efficiency** — Assumes positive change; cost/benefit ratio

**Assessment of Program Outcome/Impact** — What has changed for recipients?

**Assessment of Program Process and Implementation** — How well implemented

**Assessment of Program Design and Theory** — How to address the condition program intends to improve

**Assessment of Need for the Program** — Diagnostics to inform program design

Rossi, Lipsey, Freeman, 2004; Shattuck, 2010/2011

# What is Program Logic?

**Inputs** | **Outputs** | **Outcomes**

The resources that go into a program

The activities that the program undertakes

The changes or benefits that result

- Program Investments
  - Money
  - Staffing
  - Resources

- Activities (what we do)
- Participation (who we reach)
- Direct Transfers Provided

- What Results:
  - Short Term
  - Medium Term
  - Long Term

# Program Action - Logic Model

| Inputs | Outputs | | Outcomes - Impact | | |
|--------|---------|---|-------------------|---|---|
| | Activities | Participation | Short Term | Medium Term | Long Term |

**Situation**

Needs and assets

Symptoms versus problems

Stakeholder engagement

**Priorities**

Consider:
- MIssion
- Vision
- Values
- Mandates
- Resources
- Local dynamics
- Collaborators
- Competitors

Intended outcomes

**What we invest**

Staff

Volunteers

Time

Money

Research base

Materials

Equipment

Technology

Partners

**What we do**

Conduct workshops, meetings
Deliver services
Develop products, curriculum, resources
Train
Provide counseling
Assess
Facilitate
Partner
Work with media

**Who we reach**

Participants

Clients

Agencies

Decision-makers

Customers

Satisfaction

**What the short term results are**

Learning

Awareness

Knowledge

Attitudes

Skills

Opinions

Aspirations

Motivations

**What the medium term results are**

Action

Behavior

Practice

Decision-making

Policies

Social Action

**What the ultimate impact(s) is**

Conditions

Social

Economic

Civic

Environmental

**Assumptions**

**External Factors**

## Evaluation
### Focus - Collect Data - Analyze and Interpret - Report

**Staff**

**Money**

**Partners**

**Research**

**Develop parent ed curriculum**

**Deliver series of 8 interactive sessions**

**Facilitate support groups**

**Parents of CSA survivors**

**Parents increase knowledge of child dev.**

**Parents better understand their role in supporting child survivors**

**Parents gain skills in new ways to parent**

**Parents gain confidence in their abilities**

**Parents identify appropriate actions to take**

**Parents use effective parenting practices**

**Improved child-parent relations**

**Improved Child Outcomes (mental, physical, & behavioral health)**

## EVALUATION QUESTIONS

| What amount of $ and time were invested? | How many sessions were held? How effectively? #, quality of support groups? | Who/how many attended/did not attend? Did they attend all sessions? Supports groups? Were they satisfied – why/why not? | To what extent did knowledge and skills increase? For whom? Why? What else happened? | To what extent did behaviors change? For whom? Why? What else happened? | To what extent are relations improved? To what extent are child outcomes improved? |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|

## INDICATORS

| # Staff $ used # partners | # Sessions held  Quality criteria | #,% attended per session  Certificate of completion | #,% demonstrating increased knowledge/skills  Additional outcomes | #,% demonstrating changes  Types of changes | #,% demonstrating improvements  Types of improvements |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|

Adapted from Shattuck, 2010

# AKA: So-That relationships

| Inputs | Outputs | Outcomes |

We invest time and money **So That** We can provide hospital advocacy 24 hours a day for 3 hospitals for 1 year **So That** Survivors will have access to support, advocacy, and information **So That** They will receive timely medical services, be aware of their legal options, and be aware of the community resources available to them **So That** They will have a sense of empower-ment and control over their situation, and access to physical, mental health, legal, and other services, **So That** Survivors will have better post-trauma outcomes and our comm-unity will hold offenders account-able

Adapted from Shattuck, 2010

# Steps in Developing Research Questions:

Step 1: Develop and/or articulate a logic model to clarify program design and theory of change

Step 2: Define the evaluation's purpose and scope

Step 3: Determine the type of evaluation design (needs/process/outcome)

Step 4: Draft and finalize evaluation research questions

What questions are you currently asking?

# Basic principles for research question design:



Research questions for *process-focused evaluations* ask:

Who?
What?
When?
Where?
Why?
How?

**About:**
Inputs/resources
Program activities
Outputs
Stakeholder views

Research questions for *outcome-focused evaluations* ask about:

Changes?
Effects?
Impacts?

**In:**

(Short-term)
Knowledge
Skills
Attitudes
Opinions

(Medium-term)
Behaviors
Actions

(Long-term)
Conditions
Status

Corporation for National & Community Service, 2015

# Improving Research Questions: Specific and Explicit!

| Broad | to | Specific |
|---|---|---|
| How is the program being implemented? | | Are staff implementing the program within the same timeframe? |
| | | Are staff implementing the program with the same intended population? |
| | | What variations in implementation, if any, occur by site?  Why are variations occurring?  Are they likely to effect program outcomes? |
| | | Are there unique challenges to implementing the program by site? |
| | | ?? |
| How do program clients describe their experiences? | | What do program clients see as the benefits they receive? |
| | | Do program participants report experiencing unintended consequences of program participation? |
| | | ?? |

# Social Justice Evaluation

# Social Justice Values

o Resources should be distributed so that everyone can live a decent life.

o Human beings have equal human rights, and should be recognized in all of their diversity.

o All people should be represented and be able to advocate on their own behalf.

# What is Social Justice Evaluation?

Social justice-oriented evaluation "seeks to increase understanding of the interdependency of individual, community, and society **using a more judicious democratic process in generating knowledge** about social problems and social interventions and **using this knowledge to advance social progress**."

(Thomas & Madison, 2010)

# Tenants of Social Justice Evaluation (Thomas & Merton, 2010)

◦ Social justice evaluation…

◦ Rejects the possibility of neutrality,

◦ Includes a critical understanding of the sociopolitical forces shaping the evaluation context, including the reasons for the evaluation decisions being made,

◦ Aims to illuminates inequalities and injustices rather than mask them,

◦ Attempts to a facilitate open discussion (and recognizes the inherent limits of our capacity to do this),

◦ Pays attention to all stakeholders,

◦ Includes approaches that infuse the voice of service recipients at all points in the process

◦ Focuses on developing and using knowledge for equity and change

# Why Evaluation for Social Justice?

Evaluation provides:

An opportunity for groups to clarify and articulate for themselves how change happens
◦ For individual clients, for groups, and for communities or societies

A space for reflection as a basis for strategic action

A system for tracking, measuring, and accounting for progress

A process for gathering and analyzing the knowledge needed to inform planning

An opportunity to involve staff, clients, and other key stakeholders in a way that reflections social justice values
◦ An opportunity to center survivors in our understanding of what we do.

A Chance to document the efficacy of new models

An opportunity to make the case for movement building

(Borgman-Arboleda & Clark, 2010)

# Where are social justice issues in evaluation?

- In program goals

- In interim outcomes

- In the theory of change

- In program policies

- In program impacts

- In program strategies

- In relationships and power

- In the development of a theory of change

- In how results are reported

- In how change is implemented

- In what change is recommended

- In how change occurs

# Social justice evaluation as a learning tool

- Assessment for the purpose of learning and improving

- Focus on building knowledge that can improve survivors lives

- Focus on contribution rather than attribution (how is the organization or program contributing together, rather than who should be attributed with the blame or praise)

- Opportunity to take control back and **make impact on our own terms**

# IMPACT ON OUR TERMS

- How do you think a survivor coming to your agency defines your impact?

- How do you define your impact?

- How does your staff define your impact?

- How does your community define your impact?

- How do your funders define your impact?

<span style="color:red">Are These All The Same?
Which of these are being evaluated right now?</span>

# So what are our terms?

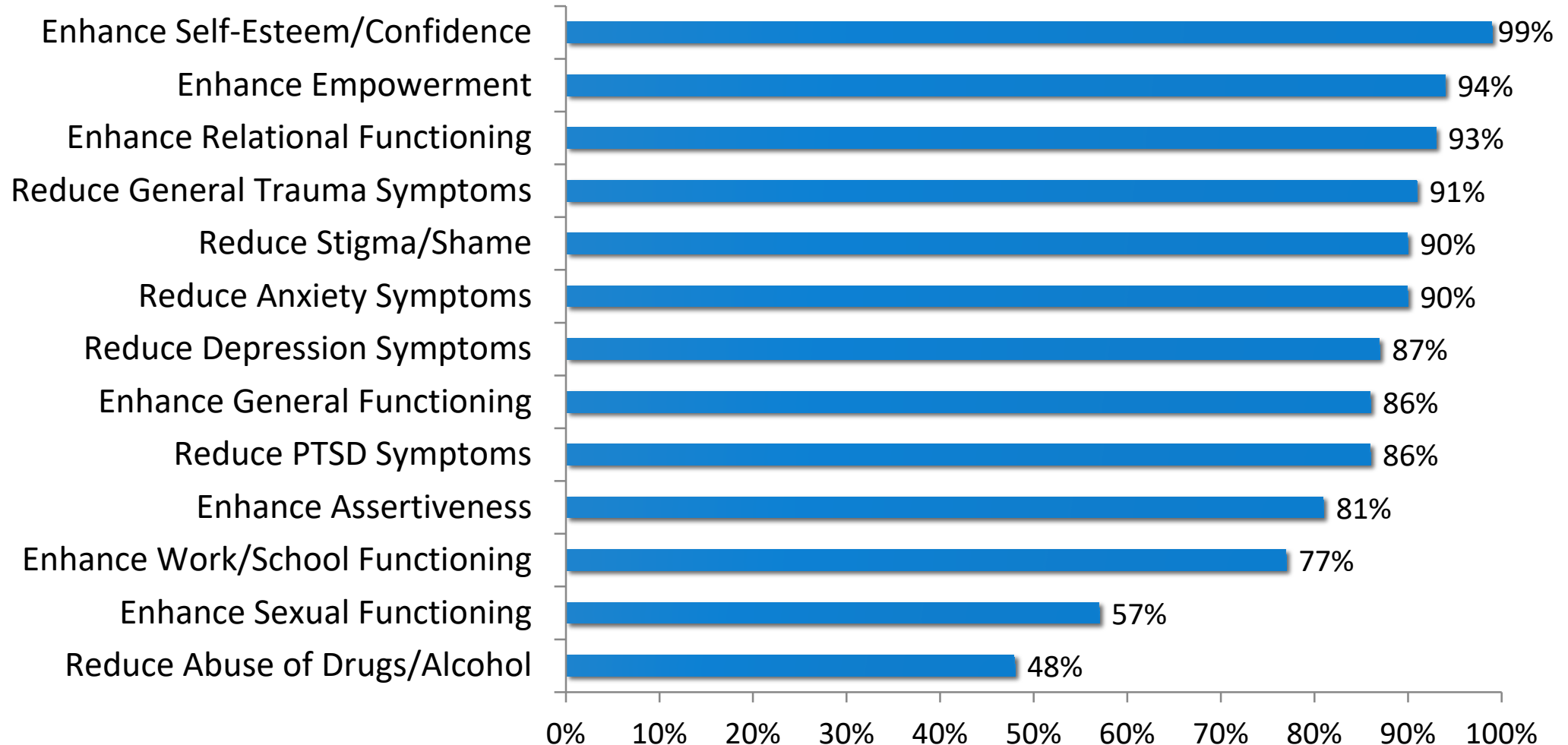A QUICK LOOK AT WHAT STAFF SEE AS THE OUTCOMES OF ONE AREA OF SEXUAL ASSAULT SERVICES

83 RCCs in TX

Each agency is asked to identify at least one agency director and one counselor to participate

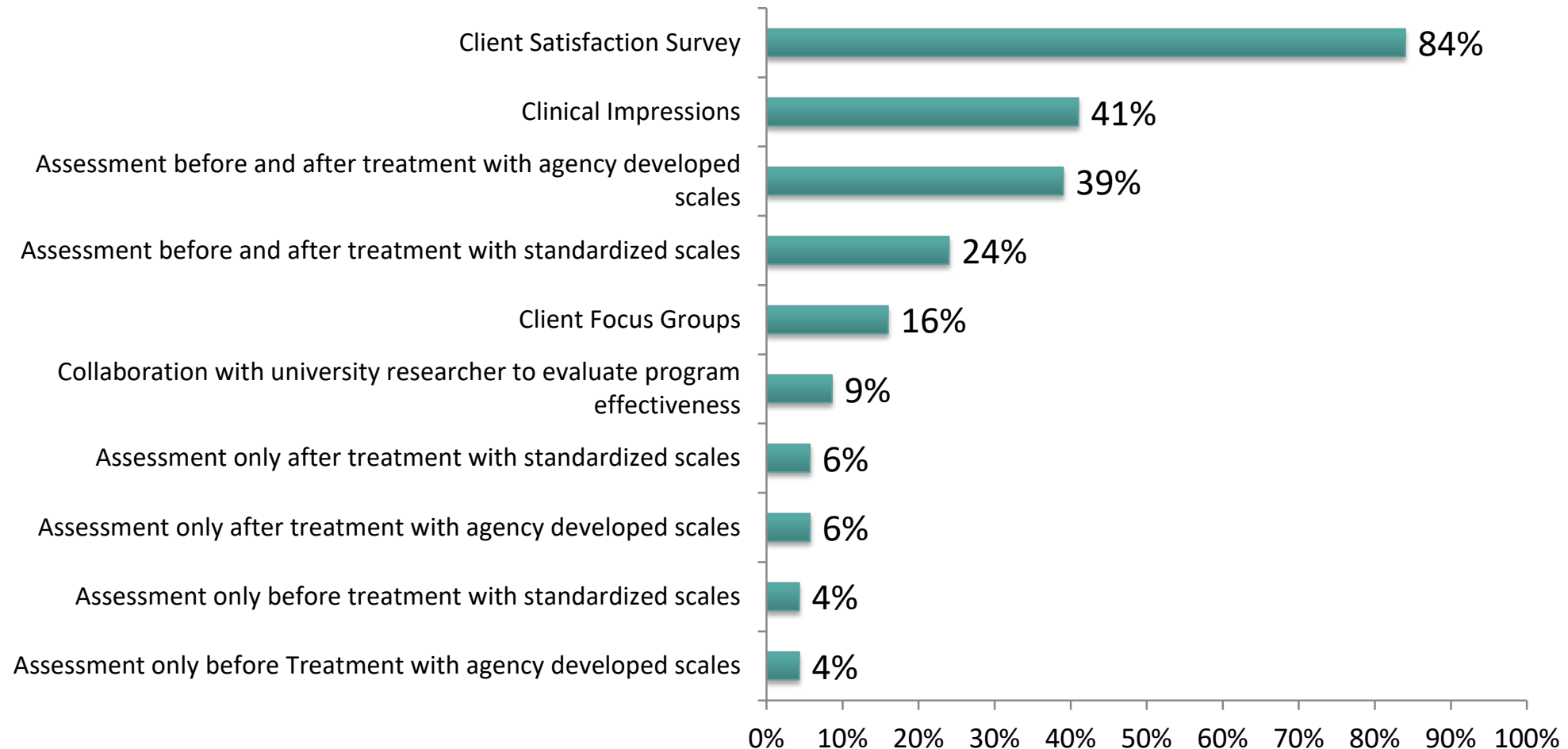At least 1 response was received from 60 agencies (agency response rate=72%)

63 Agency Directors Responded

76 Agency Counselors Responded

# Provider Treatment Goals (n=69)



| Treatment Goal | Percentage |
|---|---|
| Enhance Self-Esteem/Confidence | 99% |
| Enhance Empowerment | 94% |
| Enhance Relational Functioning | 93% |
| Reduce General Trauma Symptoms | 91% |
| Reduce Stigma/Shame | 90% |
| Reduce Anxiety Symptoms | 90% |
| Reduce Depression Symptoms | 87% |
| Enhance General Functioning | 86% |
| Reduce PTSD Symptoms | 86% |
| Enhance Assertiveness | 81% |
| Enhance Work/School Functioning | 77% |
| Enhance Sexual Functioning | 57% |
| Reduce Abuse of Drugs/Alcohol | 48% |

(Voth Schrag & Edmond, 2018)

# Agency Evaluation Strategies (n=70)

| Strategy | Percentage |
|---|---|
| Client Satisfaction Survey | 84% |
| Clinical Impressions | 41% |
| Assessment before and after treatment with agency developed scales | 39% |
| Assessment before and after treatment with standardized scales | 24% |
| Client Focus Groups | 16% |
| Collaboration with university researcher to evaluate program effectiveness | 9% |
| Assessment only after treatment with standardized scales | 6% |
| Assessment only after treatment with agency developed scales | 6% |
| Assessment only before treatment with standardized scales | 4% |
| Assessment only before Treatment with agency developed scales | 4% |

# Challenges in Social Justice Evaluation

- Evaluation expectations imposed from the outside

- Inherent power imbalances

- Differences in goals or objectives for services

- Tight timelines and resource constraints

- Outcomes that are hard to measure
  - How do we measure social change in a way that matters?

# BREAK

# How does it work?

# How does social justice evaluation work?

- Inclusive approaches to evaluation:
  - Explicit attention to issues of diversity, cultural responsiveness, and multicultural validity
  - Broad and accessible dissemination of evaluation findings
  - Critical reflection of one's own values, beliefs, and prejudices, and in relation to others
  - Trust building and attention to "interpersonal validity"
  - "Evaluator as agent of change"

# Start with Evaluating your Evaluation Efforts

Are we being true to our vision?

How have systems contributed to this problem?

What patterns are emerging?

What's being learned?

Now what?

What does it mean?

What principles are being followed?

What developments occur over time?

Who or what is being excluded, marginalized, or made a victim by the way in which this situation is being viewed or is operating?

Patton, M. Q. (2011). Developmental Evaluation: Applying Complexity Concepts to Enhance Innovation and Use. New York, NY: The Guilford Press.

# Critical Perspectives:

**Survivor Self-determination** – survivors have a say in program direction, programs can help build evaluation capacity

**Democratic** approach, never conducted by a single person

**Gives voice to those who often don't have one**

**Build a community of learners**

**Outside evaluator as a coach/critical friend**
◦ someone who believes in the program, but still asks the critical questions
◦ is a co-equal – not a superior, not a servant

**Guided by principles of truth and honesty – understand an event from multiple perspectives and worldviews – try to see it in context**

# Culturally Responsive Evaluation

**Emphasis on understanding a program as it functions in the context of culturally diverse groups**

**Explicit attention to oppression and privilege**

**Social responsibility to address unequal opportunities and resources**

**Attention to power differentials**

**Evaluator understands own cultural values**

Hopson, R. K., & Kirkhart, K. E. (2015). Culturally Responsive Evaluation (CRE): Theory to Practice and Back Again. Presented at the 2015 American Evaluation Association Summer Institute.

# Culturally Responsive Evaluation

**Culturally Responsive Evaluation Framework**
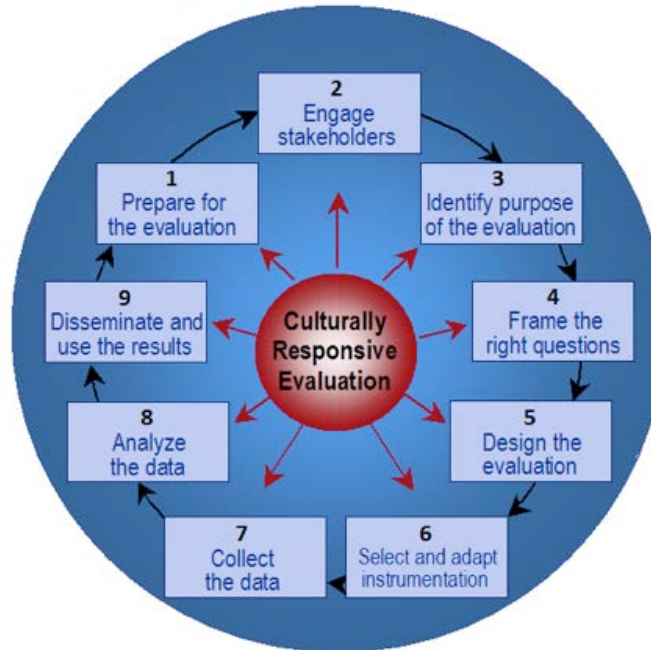


- Will a cultural insider be required to guide the evaluators in their interactions and understandings?

- How is power held, exercised, and shared (or used oppressively) in this context?

- Whose values are marginalized and whose values are privileged?

# Questions for evaluating evaluation from a social justice lens

Does the object of evaluation reproduce unfair, unjust advantage or privilege?

◦ Does it promote a fair, just distribution of social resources and social opportunities?

Are people connected to the object of evaluation and most impacted by inequities defining the need for an evaluation and the presence and role of an evaluator?

What type of knowledge is privileged in the context of the evaluation and in the evaluation itself?

Who defines how evaluative judgements are made?

What social power exists to leverage results of an evaluation and who has it?

How can evaluation findings empower?

# Tools and Strategies

# Key Questions in Social Justice Evaluation

"Whose voice is loudest in the evaluation?"

"How is power at play?"

"Who is missing?"

# How do we make this work?

How do we make sure we are attending to context and power in evaluations?

- Expand the evaluation team
  - How are survivors represented?
  - How about direct service staff?

- Expand the evaluation scope

- Work with other key players (accrediting bodies, major funders) to streamline their expectations to free up resources for this work

# How can we expand the team?

What are strategies for expanding the evaluation team?

      Advisory Boards

      Small Incentives

      Community level evaluations (partnering with other agencies and researchers

**TIP:**

Don't assume stakeholders (including survivors) find this work time consuming or burdensome.

# The People of Evaluation

| |
|---|
| Survivors |
| Community Members |
| Community Networks |
| State/Local Officials |
| School or Educational Groups |
| Legislators or Policy Makers/Shapers |
| Funders |
| Academics/Program Evaluators |

# Developing a social justice evaluation plan

Outcome Statements:
◦ Concrete, measurable outcomes that you are trying to achieve, on the path to longer-term change goals. Determined by the whole team rather than driven by funding requirements. Focused on equity.

Strategies
◦ What are you doing to reach your outcomes?

Assumptions
◦ Why do you think your strategies will lead to your outcomes?

Indicators
◦ What you will actually observe to let you know you are making progress towards your outcomes

Data
◦ How will you observe your indicators?

# Developing a Plan

1. Identify the intended use and users of the evaluation

| My Evaluation Team: | The Stakeholders in this evaluation are: |
|---|---|
| Their Strengths: | |
| Who else do we need? | With this evaluation we hope to: |
| | We will use the findings to: |

# Instead of a "program logic model" try a "So That" chain
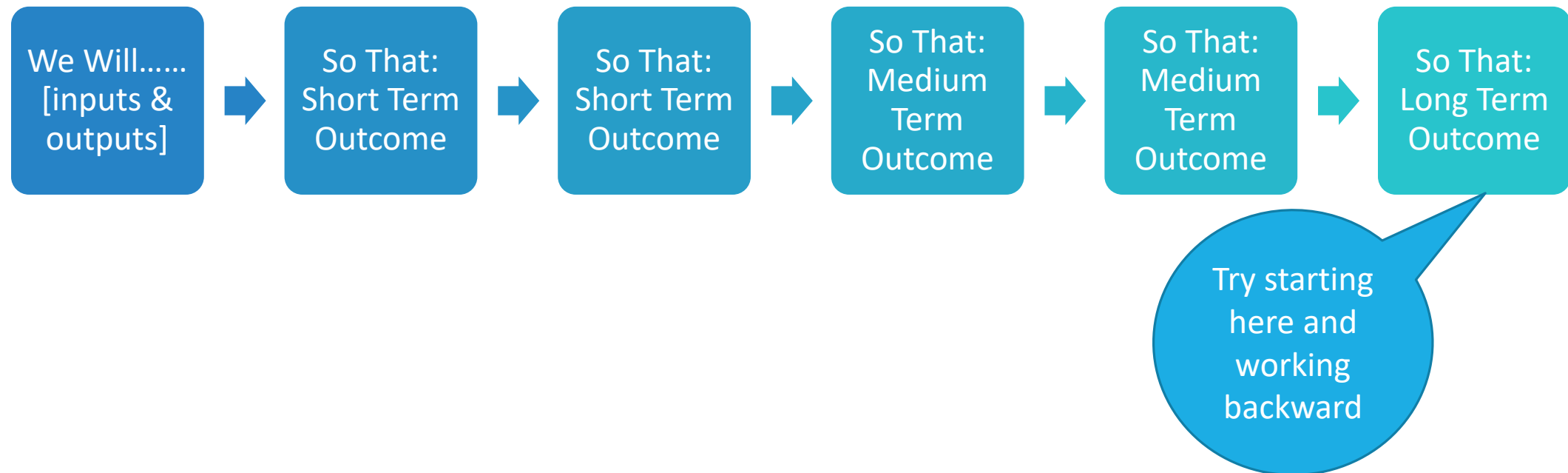
.

We Will...... [inputs & outputs] → So That: Short Term Outcome → So That: Short Term Outcome → So That: Medium Term Outcome → So That: Medium Term Outcome → So That: Long Term Outcome

Try starting here and working backward

Strategy:_____
Assumption:_____
_____

Strategy:_____
_____
Assumption:_____
_____

Strategy:_____
_____
Assumption:_____
_____

Strategy:_____
_____
Assumption:_____
_____

Indicator:_____

_____

_____

Indicator:_____

_____

_____

Outcome Statements:

_____

_____

_____

_____

Indicator:_____

_____

_____

Indicator:_____

_____

_____

Strategy:_____
Assumption:_____
_____

Strategy:_____
_____
Assumption:_____
_____

Strategy:_____
_____
Assumption:_____
_____

Strategy:_____
_____
Assumption:_____
_____

# Gathering Credible Evidence

## SOCIAL JUSTICE DO'S

- Pay attention to disparities

- Be aware of your context

- Know who your measures are for

- Advocate with funders for streamlined processes

- Pay attention to needs & processes

- Limit staff burden

## SOCIAL JUSTICE DON'TS

- Gather data that you don't have an explicit need for

- Collect the same information over and over

- Only talk to program completers

- Only talk to program participants

- Focus only on outcomes

- Prioritize data over people

# Justifying conclusions

## HOW'S

How will data be organized?

How will conclusions be drawn?

How will conclusions be shared?

## WHO'S

Who will participate in analyses?

Who will draw conclusions?

Who will have access to findings?

| Findings will be developed by these people: | → | Findings will be used in this way: | → | Findings will be shared in these formats: | → | These people will be responsible for sharing findings: |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|

# PRACTICE!

We Will… [inputs & outputs] → So That: Short Term Outcome → So That: Short Term Outcome → So That: Medium Term Outcome → So That: Medium Term Outcome → So That: Long Term Outcome

We Will… → So That: → So That: → So That: → So That: → So That:

Strategy:_____
_____
Assumption:_____

Strategy:_____
_____
Assumption:_____

Strategy:_____
_____
Assumption:_____

Strategy:_____
_____
Assumption:_____

Indicator:_____
_____
_____

Indicator:_____
_____
_____

Indicator:_____
_____
_____

Indicator:_____
_____
_____

Outcome Statements:
_____
_____
_____
_____

Strategy:_____
_____
Assumption:_____
_____

Strategy:_____
_____
Assumption:_____
_____

Strategy:_____
_____
Assumption:_____
_____

Strategy:_____
_____
Assumption:_____
_____

| Outcome Statement | Indicators | Data Source | Data Collection Plan |
|---|---|---|---|
| What will change? | How will we observe change? | Where is that information? | How will we get it? |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |

### Social Justice Do's

- Pay attention to disparities
- Be aware of your context
- Know who your measures are for
- Advocate with funders for streamlined processes
- Pay attention to needs & processes
- Limit staff burden

### Social Justice Don'ts

- Gather data that you don't have an explicit need for
- Collect the same information over and over
- Only talk to program completers
- Only talk to program participants
- Focus only on outcomes
- Prioritize data over people

# Lessons Learned

| Findings will be developed by these people: | Findings will be used in this way: | Findings will be shared in these formats: | These people will be responsible for sharing findings: |

Introduction

What is evaluation for social justice?

How does it work?

Tools and Strategies

Practice!

A final caveat

# Resources & References

**Booklet:** Considering Evaluation: Thoughts for Social Change and Movement Building Groups by Catherine Borgman-Arboleda & Helene Clark
http://www.actknowledge.org/resources/documents/ACT_K_layout6909hr.pdf

**Web resource**: Evaluaction: Putting Evaluation to Work by the Centers for Disease Control VetoViolence Team: https://vetoviolence.cdc.gov/apps/evaluaction/

**Peer Reviewed Journal Article:** Thomas, V., & Madison, A., (2010). Integration of social justice into the teaching of evaluation. *American Journal of Evaluation, 31*(4), 570-583. (contact me if you need help accessing it!)

**Report:** Klugman, B., (2010). Evaluating Social Justice Advocacy: A Values Based Approach. Center for Evaluation Innovation: www.evaluationinovation.org

# 5 key factors for picking an assessment

Conceptual link: the extent to which there is a logical connection between the assessment, social work intervention, and outcome to be measured

Potential for change: extent to which the intervention is likely to create change in the outcome being assessed over the chosen time period with the indicators selected,

Reliability and validity: evidence for minimal measurement error and efficacy in detecting change

Cultural competence: extent to which the assessment is appropriate for the survivors served by the agency

Practicality: the extent to which the strategy is relatively simple, straightforward, and easy to implement.