



AmeriCorps
Washington

Planning Grants – Theory of Change + Evidence

August 18 – 10am

Please sign-in via the chat box:

- Organization/Program
- Name(s)
- What is your favorite summer food/beverage?

Resources...reminder...

Serve WA Online Subgrantee Resources:

- [Planning Grant Meeting Materials](#)
 - Planning Grant Curriculum & Benchmarks
 - Recorded Webinars & Materials
- [Additional Resources](#)
 - Serve WA Special Terms & Conditions (Planning Grant)
- [AmeriCorps Program Handbook](#)
 - Guide for Operational Grants
 - Basis for our Planning Grant Year



Learning To Date

Previous Content

- Orientation/AmeriCorps 101
- Locating/Reviewing/Reading AmeriCorps Guidance
- Fiscal Introduction

Today's Agenda

- **Theory of Change**
- **Evidence**

Next Up (*September 1*)

- Logic Model/Performance Measures/Data Collection



Qtr. 1: Questions to Consider

- *Is there alignment between the need, intervention, and intended outcome? Clear design/dosage?*
- *What level of evidence supports this alignment?*
- *Which aspects of your program are best measured annually?*
- *How many AmeriCorps members will be needed? Are the member activities allowable?*
- *What are the characteristics and qualifications of desired AmeriCorps members?*
- *How many staff members and what roles will be supporting the program and members?*
- *Are any partner agreements necessary for data collection? How will members/sites be oriented to data collection?*
- *What checks and balances will be needed to ensure fidelity in data collection?*
- *Will you have host sites? What other partners are necessary to be successful?*
- *How will you obtain the cash match necessary to operate the program?*



2 Part Webinar

- **Theory Of Change (TOC):** Designing Effective Action for Change

<https://americorps.gov/sites/default/files/modules/module-2-designing-effective-action-for-change/story.html>

- Building **Evidence** of Effectiveness

<https://americorps.gov/sites/default/files/modules/module-3-building-evidence-of-effectiveness/story.html>





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Module 2

Designing Effective Action for Change



Module Objectives

- Describe the benefits of a Theory of Change.
- Define the three elements needed to construct a Theory of Change.
- Identify how the Theory of Change informs the program design.



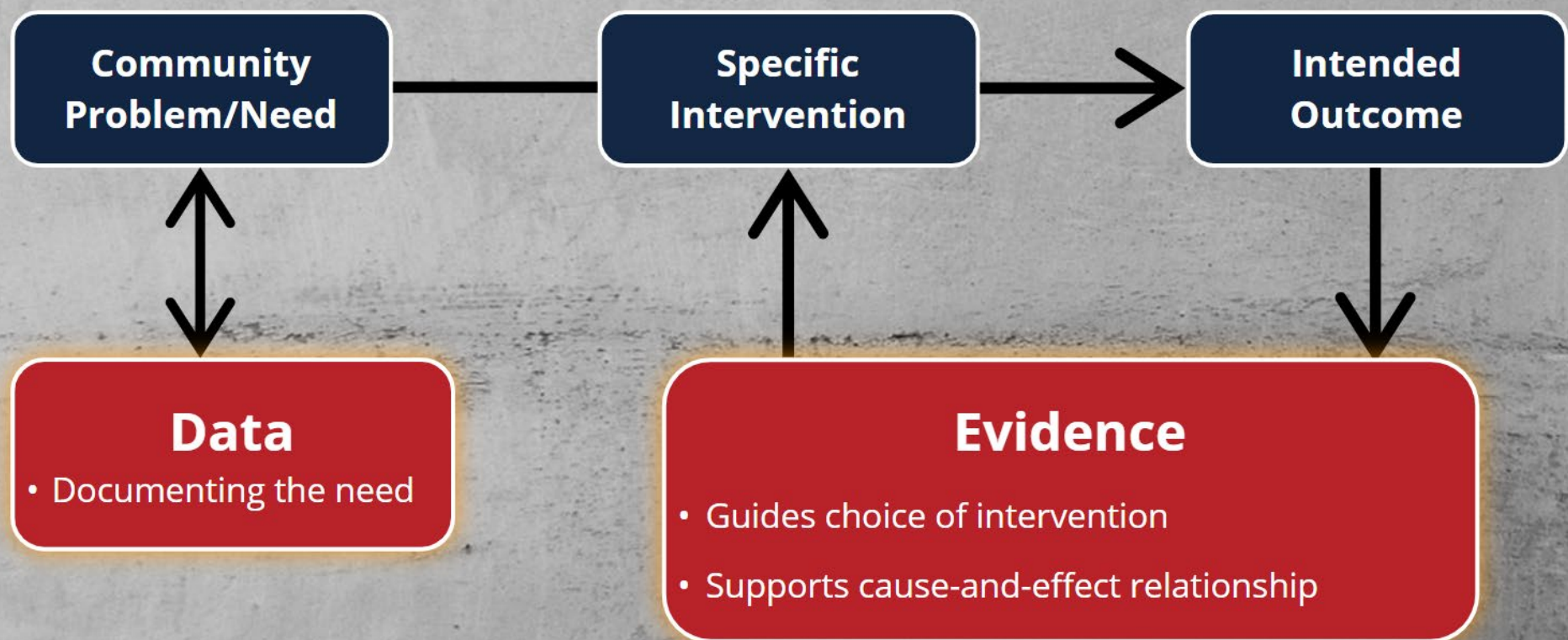


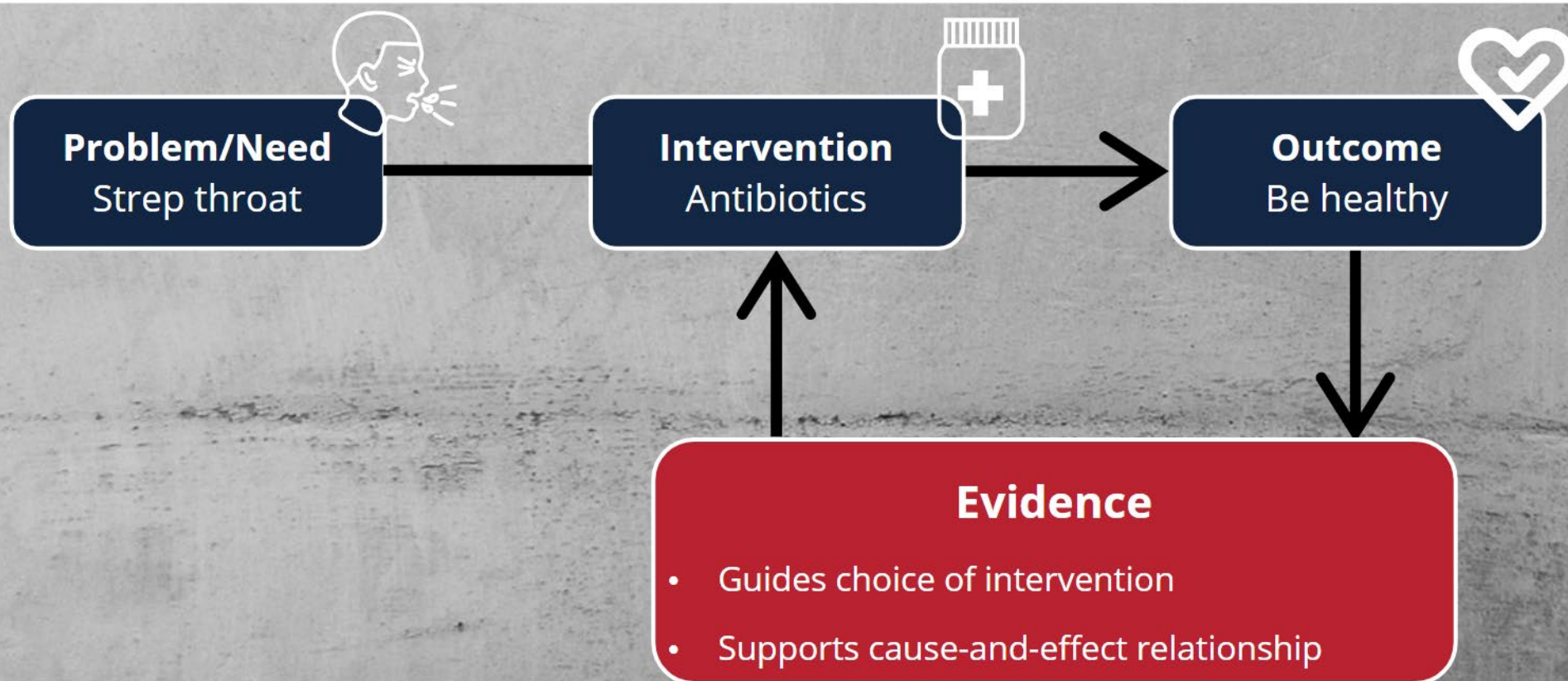
- Examine cause-and-effect relationships.
- Identify specific interventions to achieve the desired result.
- Shift thinking from *"What are we doing?"* to *"What do we want to achieve?"*

Clarifying your Theory of Change is also critical for existing programs. It allows you to:

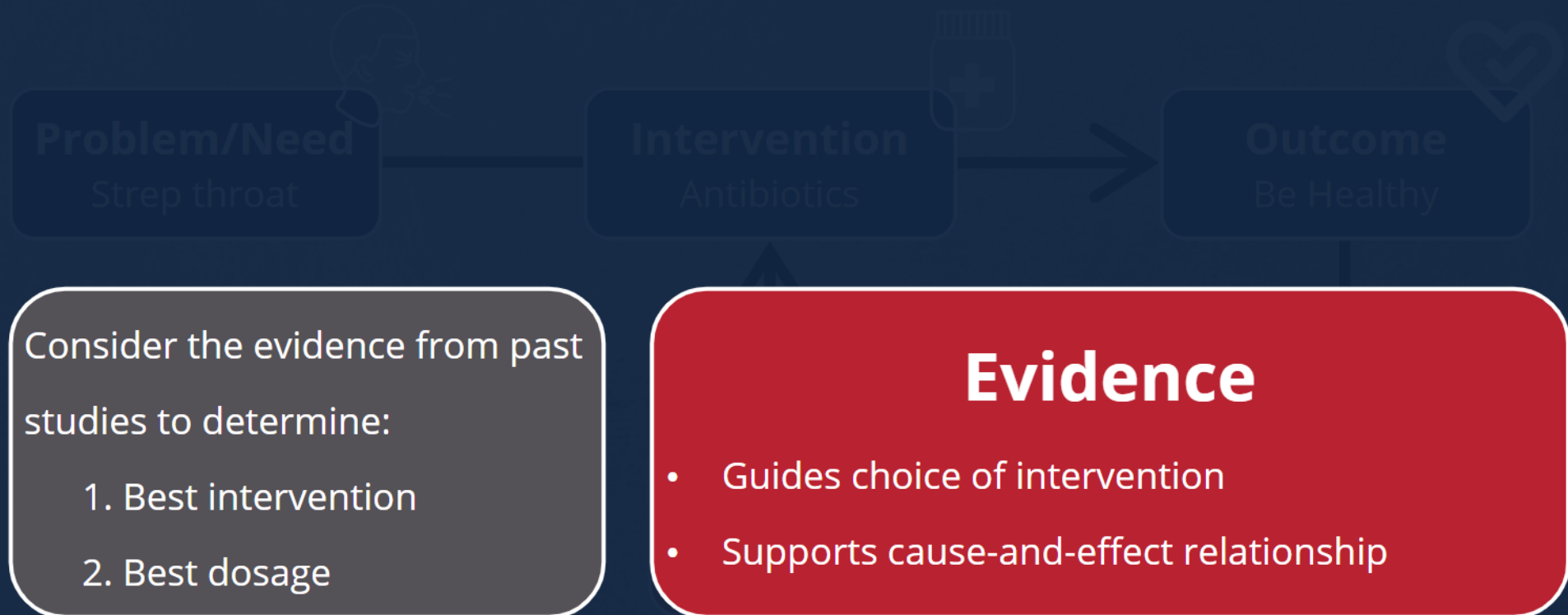


- Compare and contrast your program's approach to similar programs.
- Consider where to make changes in your intervention to strengthen your program's outcomes.
- Revisit outcome(s) to meaningfully address need.

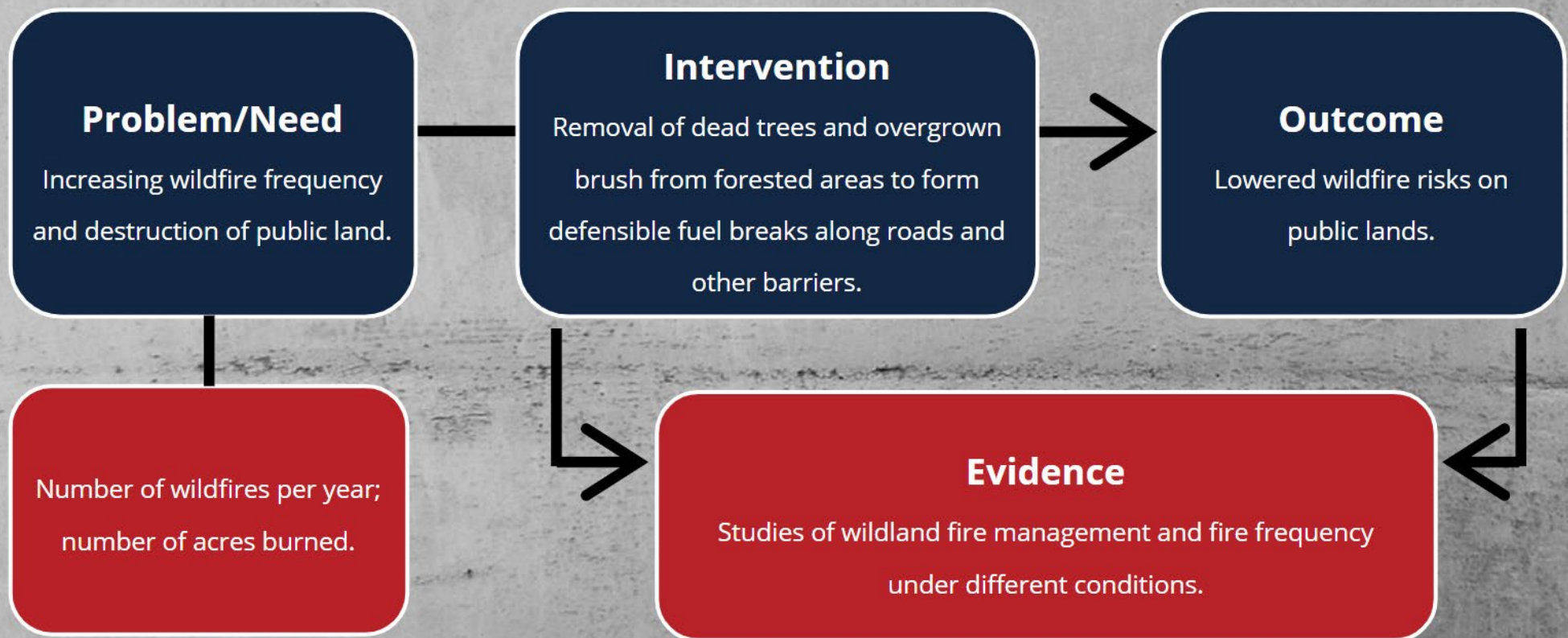




Everyday Life Example Evidence



Performance Measure Example



Community Problem and Need Defined

**Community
Problem/Need**

**Specific
Intervention**

Intended Outcome

A community problem or need is a negative condition or gap in what currently exists in your community that disrupts individual or community life and/or deprives people of legal or moral rights (equity).

This condition is documented through data showing the scope, significance, and causes of the problem/need.



The Best Data

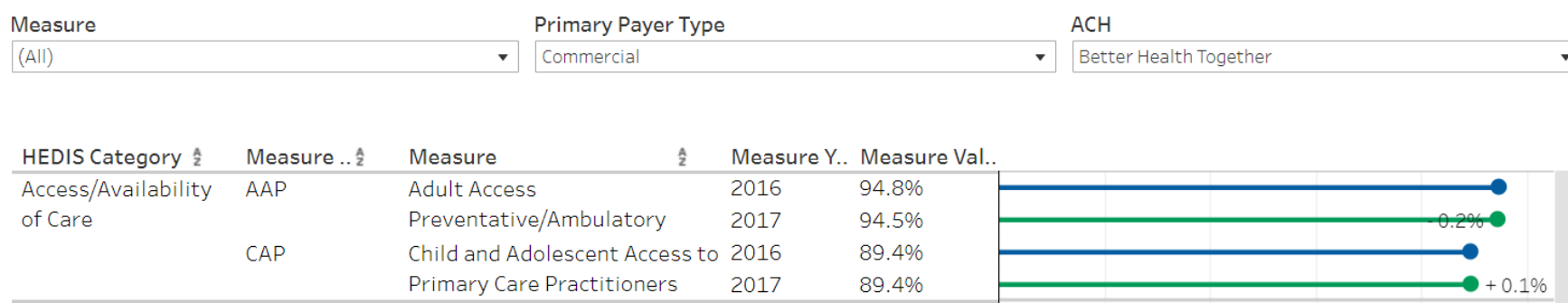


Viewing invasive species removal in a whole-ecosystem context

[ES Zavaleta](#), [RJ Hobbs](#), [HA Mooney](#) - Trends in Ecology & Evolution, 2001 - Elsevier

Eradications of **invasive species** often have striking positive effects on native biota. However, recent research has shown that **species removal** in isolation can also result in unexpected changes to other

Washington State HEDIS Quality Measures (Claims Based)



Searching for Statistics

Examples

- Census data
- County Health Rankings
- Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction
- Environmental Protection Agency
- National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
- Department of Natural Resources
- Others?

Community Problem/Need

- Data documenting problem/need should answer these questions:
 - **SCOPE:** Who and how many are directly affected? Is this an issue specific to a target group of individuals based on race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender, age, or protected class of individuals? How severe is this?
 - **SIGNIFICANCE:** What makes this a compelling need? Is it likely to become worse? What will happen if we do nothing?
 - **CAUSE(S):** Why does the need exist? How is it perpetuated?



X Lengthy problem statements
with irrelevant information

Searching for Statistics

- COMMON ISSUE: DATA DUMP
 - Example: EnviroCorps maintains trails throughout public parks in Iberia County. Many parks have deteriorating trails. Lack of maintained trail system leads to soil erosion and water runoff polluting nearby streams as well. Hikers are more likely to not stay on the trails that aren't maintained and end of causing damage fragile habitats.
- Which data would be LESS directly relevant to include?
- Water pollution concentrations
- Measures of soil erosion
- Poverty rates
- Invasive species cover rates
- Miles of unmaintained trail
- Average number of hikers

Searching for Statistics

- **EQUITY LENS – reconsidering these common terms**
 - *At-Risk Youth*
 - *Underserved Community*
 - *Achievement Gap*
 - *Under Resourced*
- <https://shelterforce.org/2019/11/12/the-opposite-of-deficit-based-language-isnt-asset-based-language-its-truth-telling/>

Searching for Statistics

Terms to Avoid	Ideal Language Better Language
Aliens, Illegals, Illegal immigrants	Individuals who are undocumented, immigrants
Challenged, Differently-abled, Handicapable, Handicapped, Special needs	People with disabilities
Citizens	If it is not necessary to refer to citizenship status, use people or residents.
Developing nations, Developing world, First world, Third world, Global South	Be specific—name the country (e.g., Somalia) or the geographical region (e.g., East Africa). When trying to communicate the level of monetary resources, use low-, middle-, and high-income countries.
Disparities due to race, Disproportionality by race/ethnicity	Inequities due to racism – see next section, Improving the Way We Talk About Inequities Due to Racism
Homosexual	LGBTQ+ people, the LGBTQ+ community
Minorities	People of color, Communities of color
Sexual preference(s)	Sexual orientation
Special interest groups, Special populations, Vulnerable populations	Marginalized communities, Marginalized people
Transgendered, Transsexual	Transgender, Trans

https://healthequity.wa.gov/Portals/9/Doc/Publications/Reports/EquityLanguageGuide_Final_.pdf

Searching for Data

- **EQUITY LENSE**
- **SCOPE:** Who and how many are directly affected? How severe is this?
- **SIGNIFICANCE:** What makes this a compelling need? Is it likely to become worse? What will happen if we do nothing?
- **CAUSE(S): Why does the need exist? How is it perpetuated?**

Searching for Data

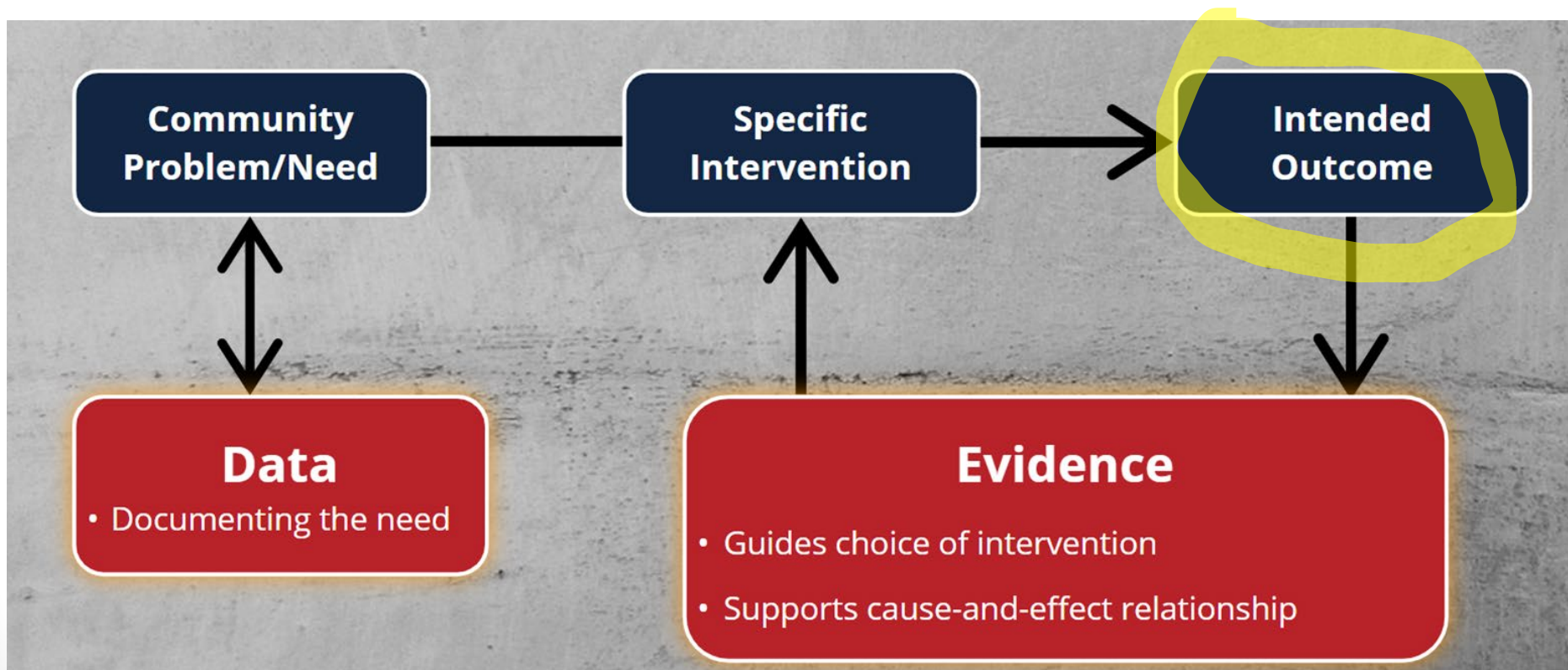
RACIAL EQUITY LENS

Language matters.

- “State data have consistently pointed to differences in access and outcomes experienced by people of color. ...Be explicit about racism and other forms of oppression as the underlying causes for the inequities that exist and show up in state data.”

Intended Outcome

- What change are you hoping to make related to the identified need?



Identifying the Intended Outcome

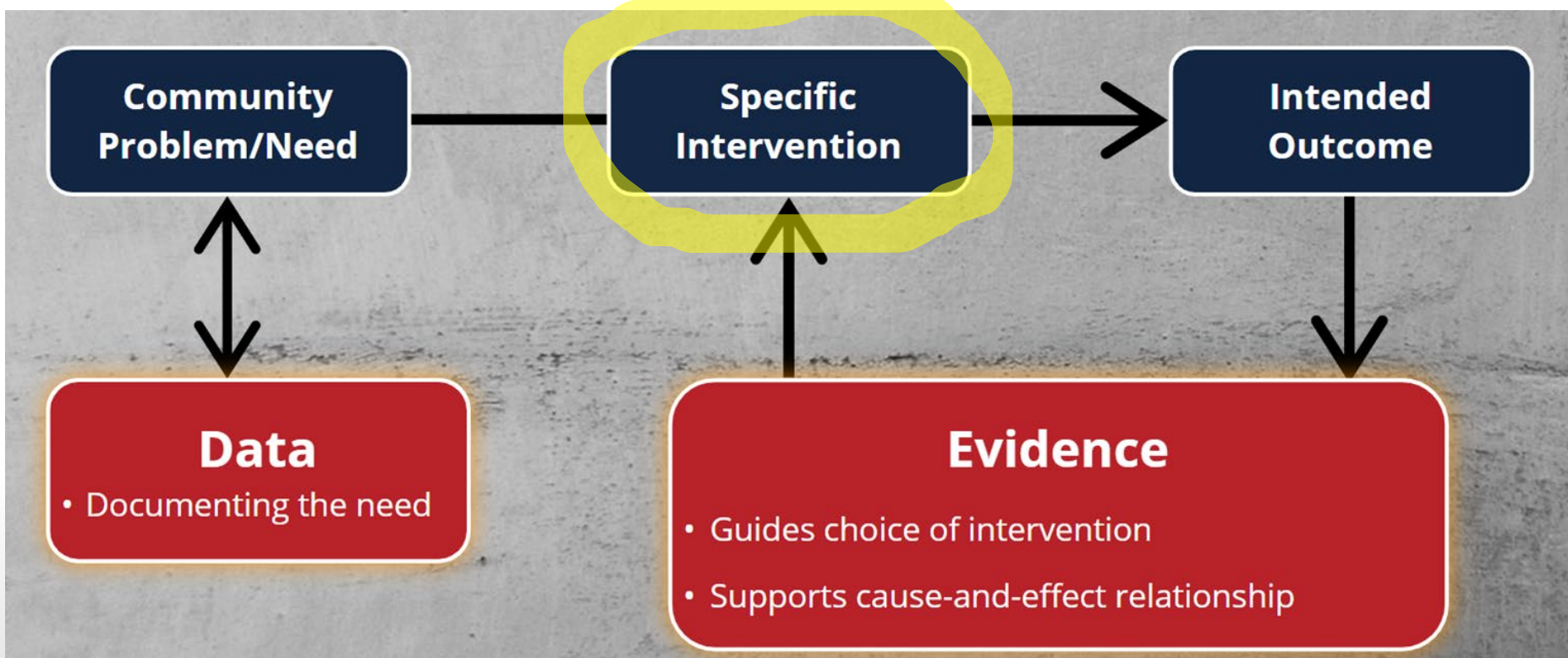
- Economic Opportunity Program Example
- Possible outcomes to measure:
 - secured employment
 - transitioned into safe, healthy, affordable housing
 - improved job readiness



X Outcomes that are difficult to measure
or don't align with other ToC components

Intervention

- An intervention is the specific set of activities in which participants and volunteers will be engaged. What is the best way to achieve the intended outcome?



Intervention

- Describe the design and dosage of your intervention (service activity):
 - **Design** (who does what with whom?)
 - **Dosage**
 - **Frequency** (how many sessions a week?)
 - **Intensity** (length of each session)
 - **Duration** (how many total weeks of sessions?)

Intervention Example

- Healthy Futures Program Example
 - **Design:** national service participants implement the Run Up curriculum with youth ages 17-21 to increase physical fitness and educate them on body awareness
 - **Frequency:** twice a week
 - **Intensity:** 60 minutes per session
 - **Duration:** 12 weeks



X Interventions lacking detail or support of evidence

- **Intervention:** Tutoring, structured physical activities, field trips etc. 3-4 hours daily, throughout the school year.

- **Intervention REFINED:** 30 AmeriCorps members will provide teacher identified 3rd-6th graders 1-1 tutoring at least two hours per week and structured small group physical activities for 1-2 hours afterschool each day throughout the school year.

Is your Theory of Change:

Plausible?

Feasible?

Meaningful?



Does the logic of the model seem correct? If we do these things, are we likely to get the results we expect? Do the data and evidence support the need and intervention?

Are resources and time frames sufficient to implement the chosen intervention?

Are intended outcomes important? Do they “move the needle” on addressing the community need? Is the magnitude of expected change worth the effort?

Three elements needed to construct a Theory of Change:

- Community problem/need
- Specific intervention
- Intended outcome

Two supportive elements to the Theory of Change are:

- Data that documents the need
- Evidence that supports the choice of intervention

Test your Theory of Change

- Plausible
- Feasible
- Meaningful

Break

- 10 minute stretch break!
- Chair Yoga (5 minutes) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-YTPV0f_DFs





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Module 3

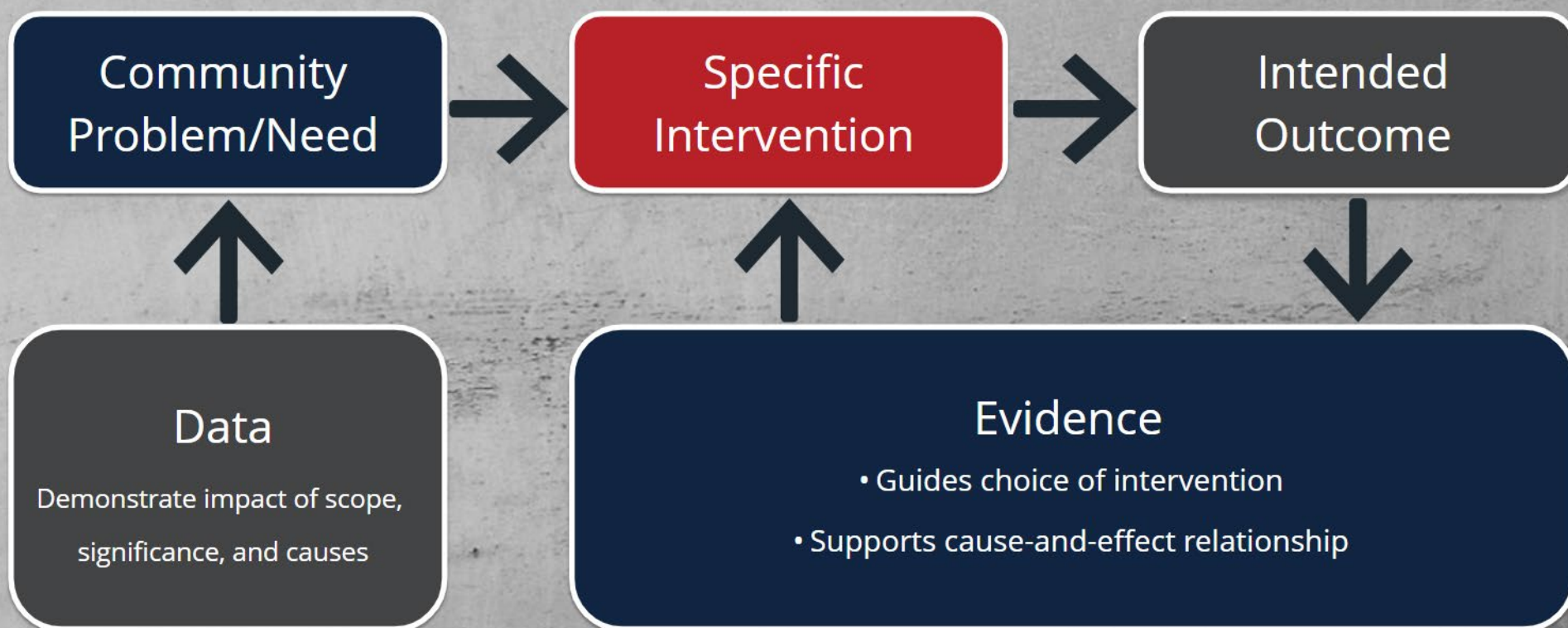
Building Evidence of Effectiveness



Module Objectives

- Understand how evidence informs theory of change and program design
- Be familiar with various types of evidence
- Understand how to assess evidence

Theory Of Change: Elements



Evidence Defined



Evidence is information or facts obtained using specific criteria.

It is the result of rigorous data collection and research.



Replicable

Credible

Observable

Verifiable

New Programs

If you're starting a new program:

- Evidence provides the basis to choose an intervention to meet a specific community need.



Existing Programs

If you're operating a program already:

- Evidence helps you understand whether your intervention is producing the intended outcomes.

Cause-And-Effect Relationships I



Establish cause-and-effect when you compare:

Individuals
who do NOT
receive
intervention



Individuals
who receive
intervention

A Theory of Change is a theory about the
cause-and-effect relationship between
intervention and outcome.

Experimental and quasi-experimental
evaluations are designed to test this
relationship.

They are the rigorous evaluation designs
being referenced here.

These rigorous evaluation designs test the
theory in controlled settings, like with a specific
population and with consistent implementation
standards.

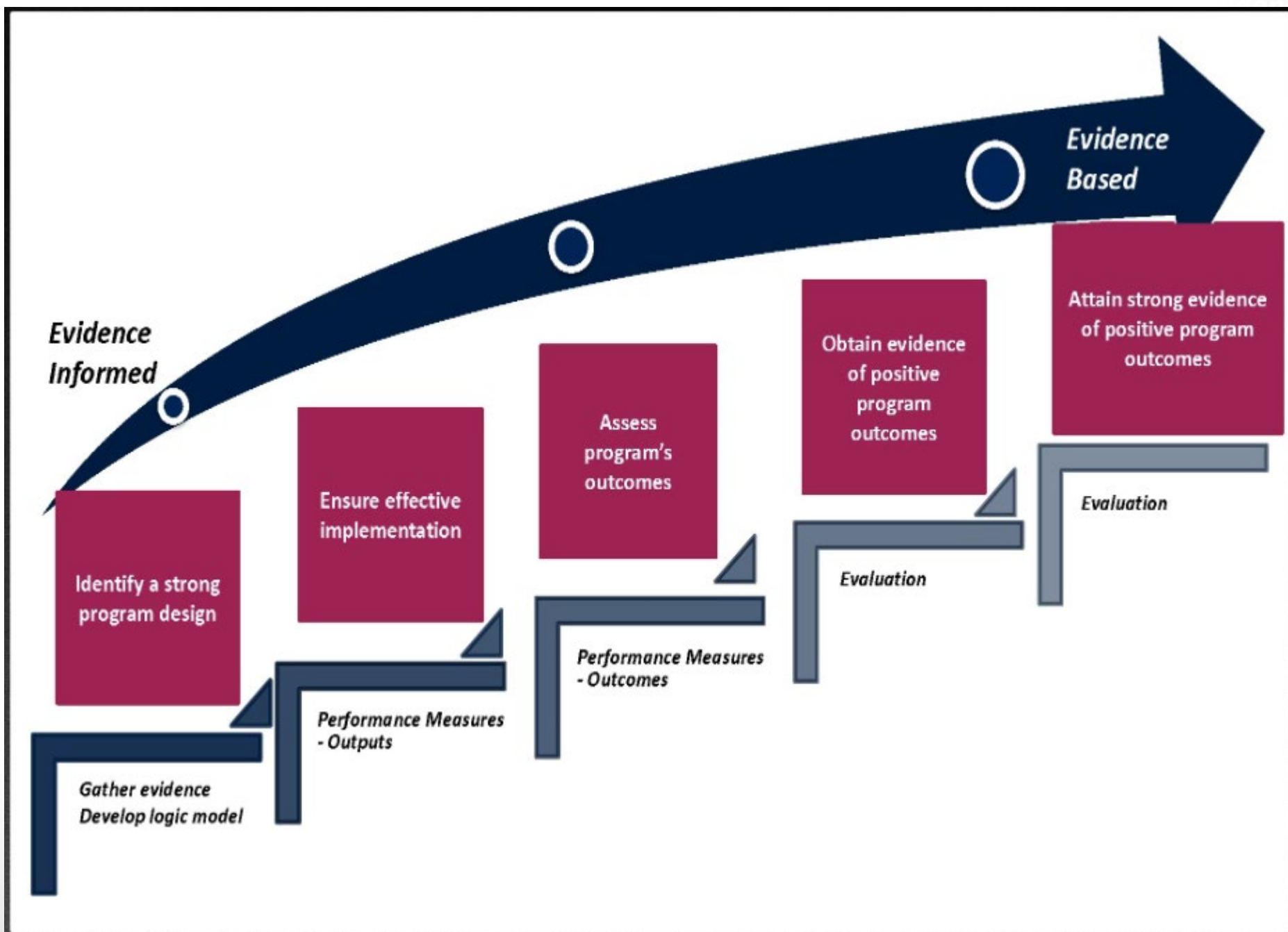
Building Evidence of Effectiveness



Evidence-based programs have used experimental or quasi-experimental evaluations to establish the cause-and-effect relationship between the program's intervention and outcomes.

Evidence-informed programs have not yet established cause-and-effect relationships but use the best available evidence to guide program design and implementation.

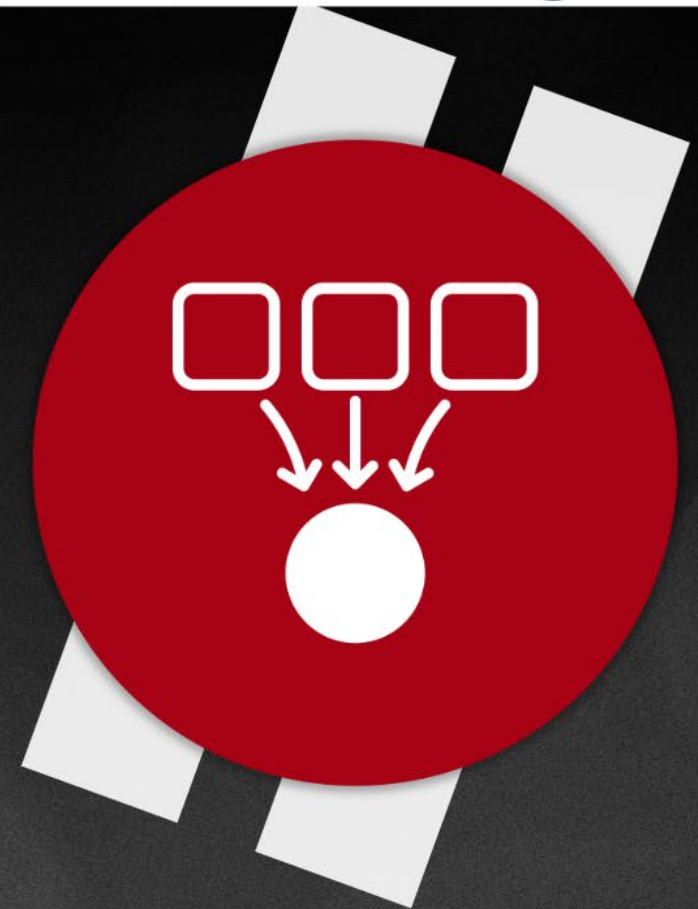
Building Evidence of Effectiveness



Sources Of Evidence

- Evaluations/studies that document the outcomes of similar program models.
- Performance measurement outcome data from your program.
- Results from an evaluation/study of the program model you are implementing.

The various National Service programs may have different requirements. Check the appropriate notices of funding opportunities for details.





Assess how the evidence applies to the design of your program.

If other programs successfully did what you want to do, consider replicating all or part of these models.

Performance Measurement Data

These findings do not demonstrate causation but provide data about whether or not a change occurred.

These findings show the intended result was achieved.

When looking at past performance measurement data, ask:

- What do your data tell you?
- Is it high-quality data?
- Did you achieve your intended outcome?
- Did some subgroups or aspects of the intervention experience better outcomes than others?
- Do you have multiple years of outcome data you can aggregate?
- Was it consistently tracked over time?



Evaluations/Studies Of Your Program Model



Key questions to ask are:

- What type of evaluation is it?
- Did the evaluation look at program outcomes?
- Does the evaluation document positive change in beneficiaries' knowledge, attitude, behavior, or condition?
- If your program model did not meet the outcomes as expected, what have you learned and what changes are you making to improve?
- Does the evaluation show that the intervention is what caused the change?

Assessing Evidence

- Considerations:

- **Similar:** Cites comparable intervention with similar beneficiaries and results
- **Significant:** Findings show that the program had a positive and statistically significant effect on beneficiaries
- **Up-to-date:** Recently published or most recent available
- **High Quality:** Use well-implemented and appropriate research methodologies given the research questions of interest
- **Reputable:** Source with no stake in outcome and published in a peer reviewed journal or by credible organization

Evidence Continuum

Select a continuum dot to learn more about evidence continuum

Preliminary

*low
causation*

- Results from non-experimental outcome evaluations
- Does not show causality
- No statistically matched comparison group

Moderate

- Results from impact evaluations (experimental or quasi-experimental design)
- Shows causality, compares intervention recipients to non-recipients
- Limited generalizability (effectiveness demonstrated only for a single site or population)

Strong

*high
causation*

- Results from impact evaluations (experimental or quasi-experimental design)
- Shows causality, compares intervention recipients to non-recipients
- Generalizable across multiple sites and/or populations

Searching Online

<https://www.nationalservice.gov/impact-our-nation/evidence-exchange> - **AmeriCorps Evidence Exchange**

<https://scholar.google.com/> - **Google Scholar**

<https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/> - **What Works Clearinghouse**
- reviews the existing research on different programs, products, practices, and policies in education

Key Points

- Evidence helps us understand whether or not a program is achieving its intended outcomes
- A program's theory of change should be informed by evidence about what interventions are, and are not, likely to be successful in achieving the intended outcomes
- The strength of a program's evidence exists on a continuum, and different types of evidence are appropriate at different stages of a program's life cycle
- Factors to consider when assessing evidence quality include: similarity, significance or strength of findings, recency, quality and whether the evidence is from a reputable source

<https://americorps.gov/grantees-sponsors/national-performance-measurement-core-curriculum>



“Homework”

- *Continue reviewing and reading AmeriCorps guidance documents.*
- **Begin developing a Theory of Change**
- **Identify evidence to support the Theory of Change framework**



Deliverables

- Theory of Change

Submit to **Lou and Jenny** anytime through **mid-October** for general feedback.

Continue to discuss/asses throughout the planning grant year.

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Jenny Benson – jenny.benson@ofm.wa.gov



Closing

