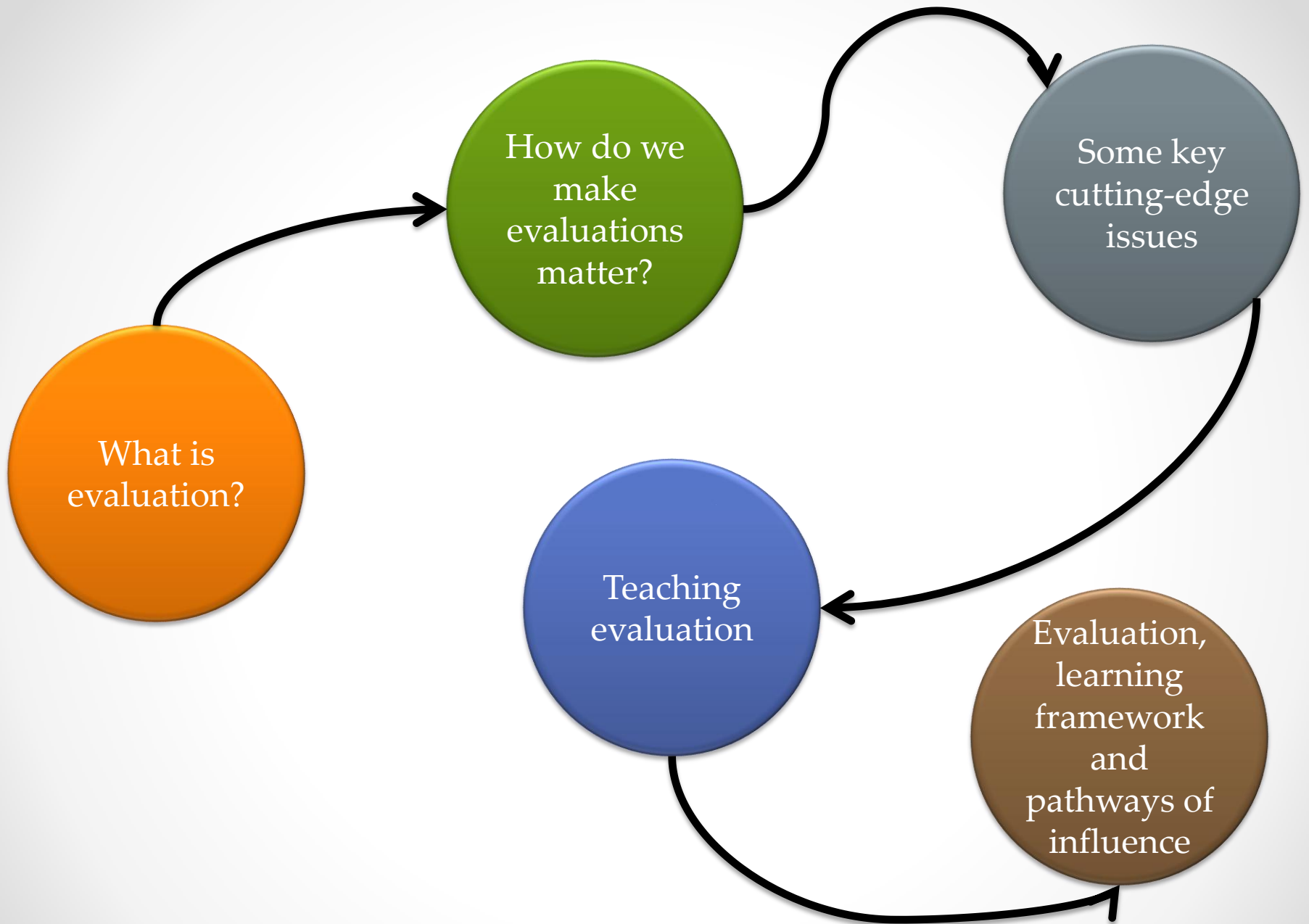


Towards a transformative view of evaluation: Building evaluation as a field

Presentation at the Institute for Work and Health
May 22nd 2012

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The Evaluation Centre for Complex Health Interventions
University of Toronto &
St. Michael's Hospital



What is
evaluation?

How do we
make
evaluations
matter?

Some key
cutting-edge
issues

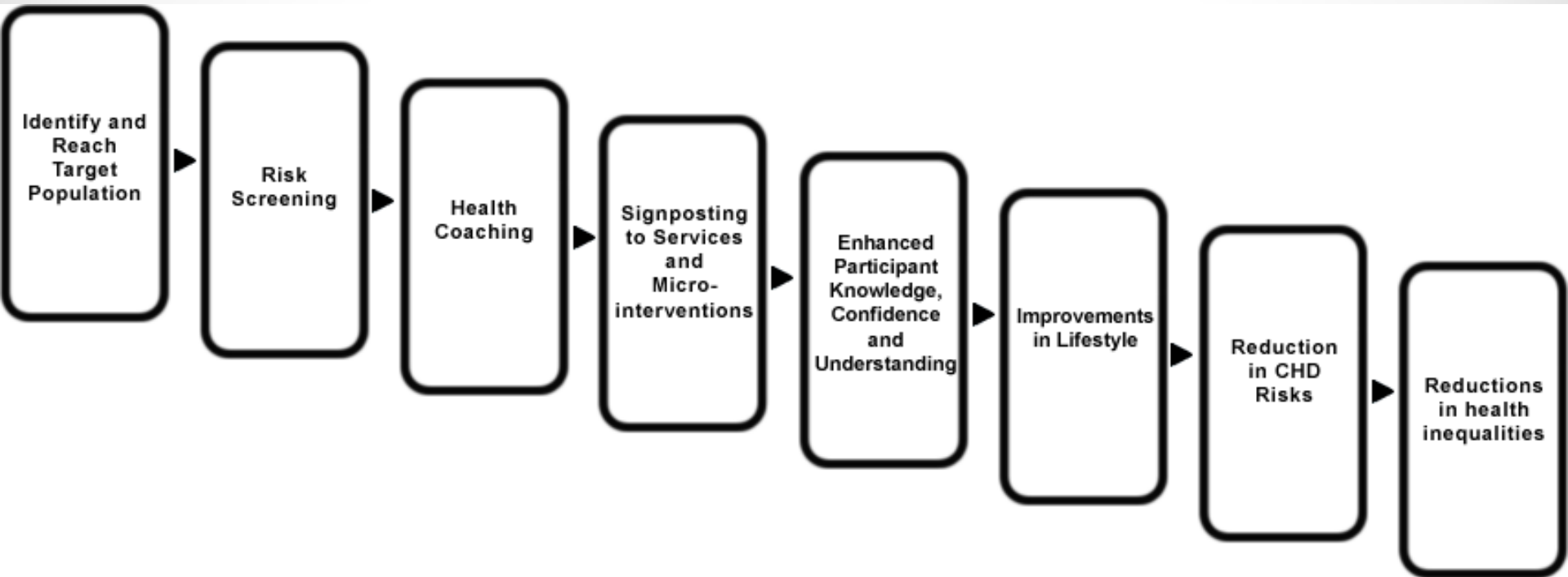
Evaluation,
learning
framework
and
pathways of
influence

Teaching
evaluation

What is evaluation? A useful but perhaps incomplete definition

- Evaluation is defined both as a means of assessing performance and to identify alternative ways to deliver
- “evaluation is the systematic collection and analysis of evidence on the outcomes of programs to make judgments about their relevance, performance and alternative ways to deliver them or to achieve the same results.”

An Example: Primary Prevention Have a Heart Paisley



Purpose of evaluation (Mark, Henry and Julnes, 2000)

- Assessing merit and worth
 - Causal questions, RCT, observational studies
- Programme and organizational improvement
 - Formative evaluation
- Oversight and compliance
- Knowledge development
 - Neglected purpose of many evaluations

Features of complex interventions (Pawson et al., 2004)

- The intervention is a theory or theories
- The intervention involves the actions of people.
- The intervention consists of a chain of steps
- These chains of steps or processes are often not linear, and involve negotiation and feedback at each stage.
- Interventions are embedded in social systems and how they work is shaped by this context.
- Interventions are prone to modification as they are implemented.
- Interventions are open systems and change through learning as stakeholders come to understand them.

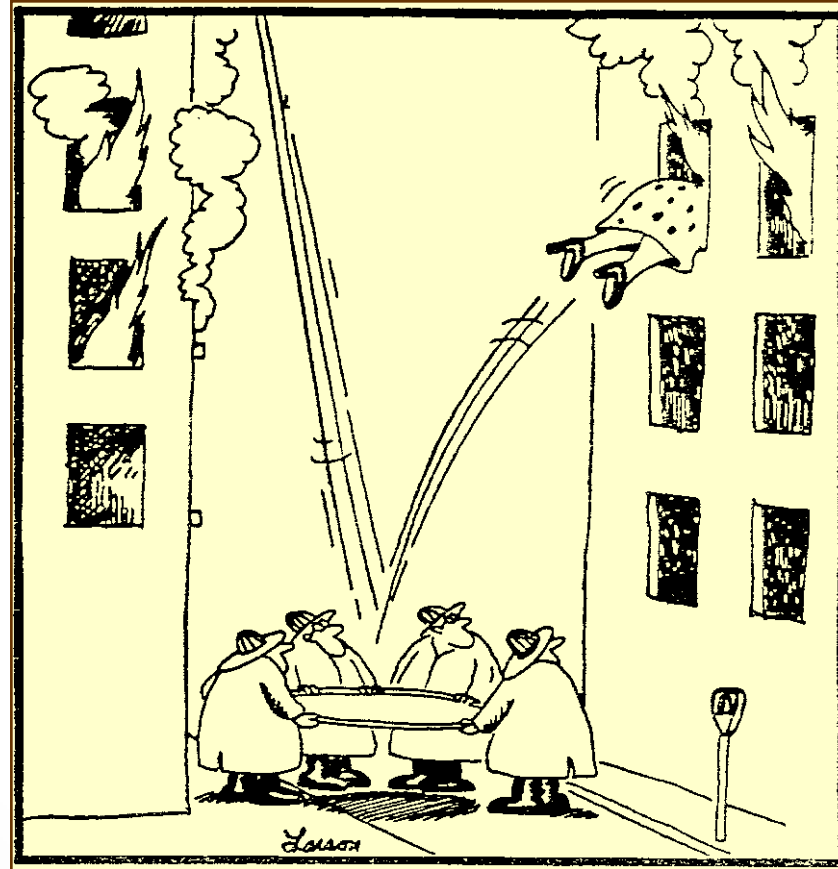
System Dynamic Approaches (Sterman, 2006)

- Constantly changing;
- Governed by feedback;
- Non-linear, History-dependent;
- Adaptive and evolving;
- Characterized by trade-offs;
- Policy resistance: “The result is *policy resistance*, the tendency for interventions to be defeated by the system’s response to the intervention itself.”

“Solutions” Can Also Create New Problems

Policy resistance is the tendency for interventions to be delayed, diluted, or defeated by the response of the system to the intervention itself.

-- Meadows, Richardson, Bruckman

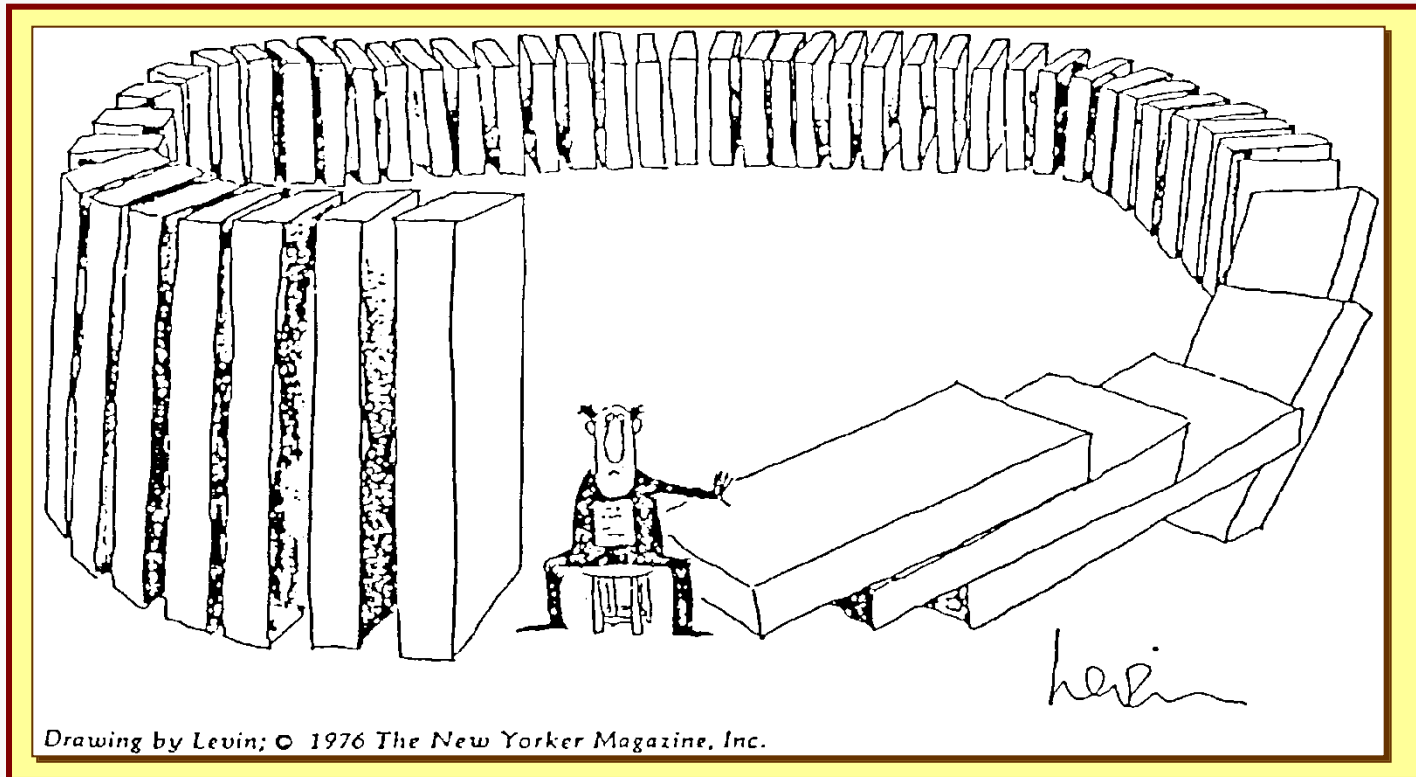


Meadows DH, Richardson J, Bruckmann G. Groping in the dark: the first decade of global modelling. New York, NY: Wiley, 1982.

Merton RK. The unanticipated consequences of purposive social action. American Sociological Review 1936;1936:894-904.

Forrester JW. Counterintuitive behavior of social systems. Technology Review 1971;73(3):53-68.

System-as-Cause



Forrester JW. Counterintuitive behavior of social systems. *Technology Review* 1971;73(3):53-68.

Meadows DH. *Leverage points: places to intervene in a system*. Sustainability Institute, 1999.
Available at <http://www.sustainabilityinstitute.org/pubs/Leverage_Points.pdf>.

Richardson GP. *Feedback thought in social science and systems theory*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991.

Sterman JD. *Business dynamics: systems thinking and modeling for a complex world*. Boston, MA: Irwin McGraw-Hill, 2000.

So why are evaluations so
often not very useful?

UN Office of the Internal Oversight Services, 2008

- A Critique of Results-Based Management (2008).
- “Results-based management at the United Nations has been an administrative chore of little value to accountability and decision-making.”

The UN Critique of performance management and evaluation

- **Lack of strategic direction and cross-organizational performance incentives**
- Problems of attribution and trivializing innovation
- Trivializing outcomes
- The practice of lacks rigor
- **A lack of purpose**

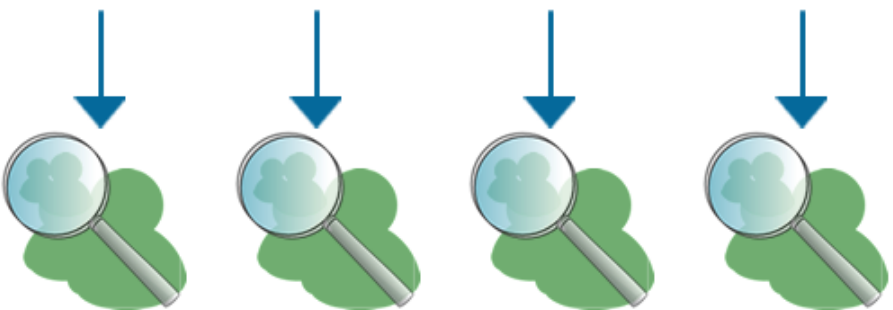
The UN Critique (2)

- Lack of clarity on the consequences of good and poor performance
- Lack of clarity on the capacity needed to build a results-based management system
- **Technical solutions are not a substitute for substantive clarity**

Repeated Programmes

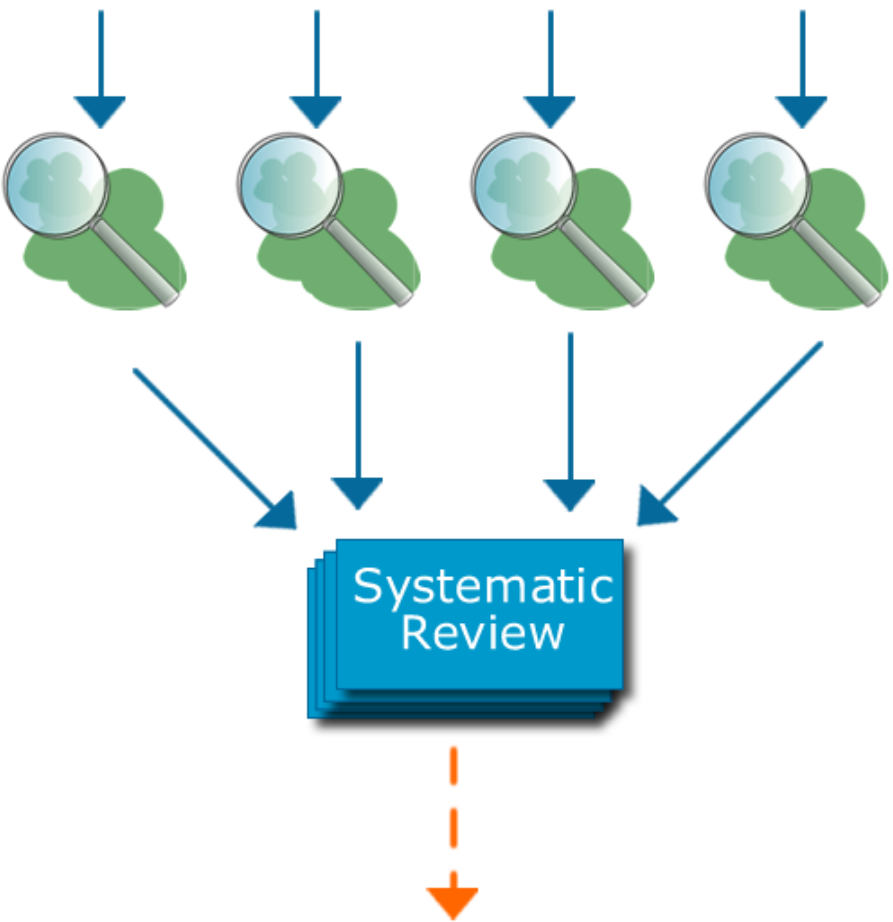


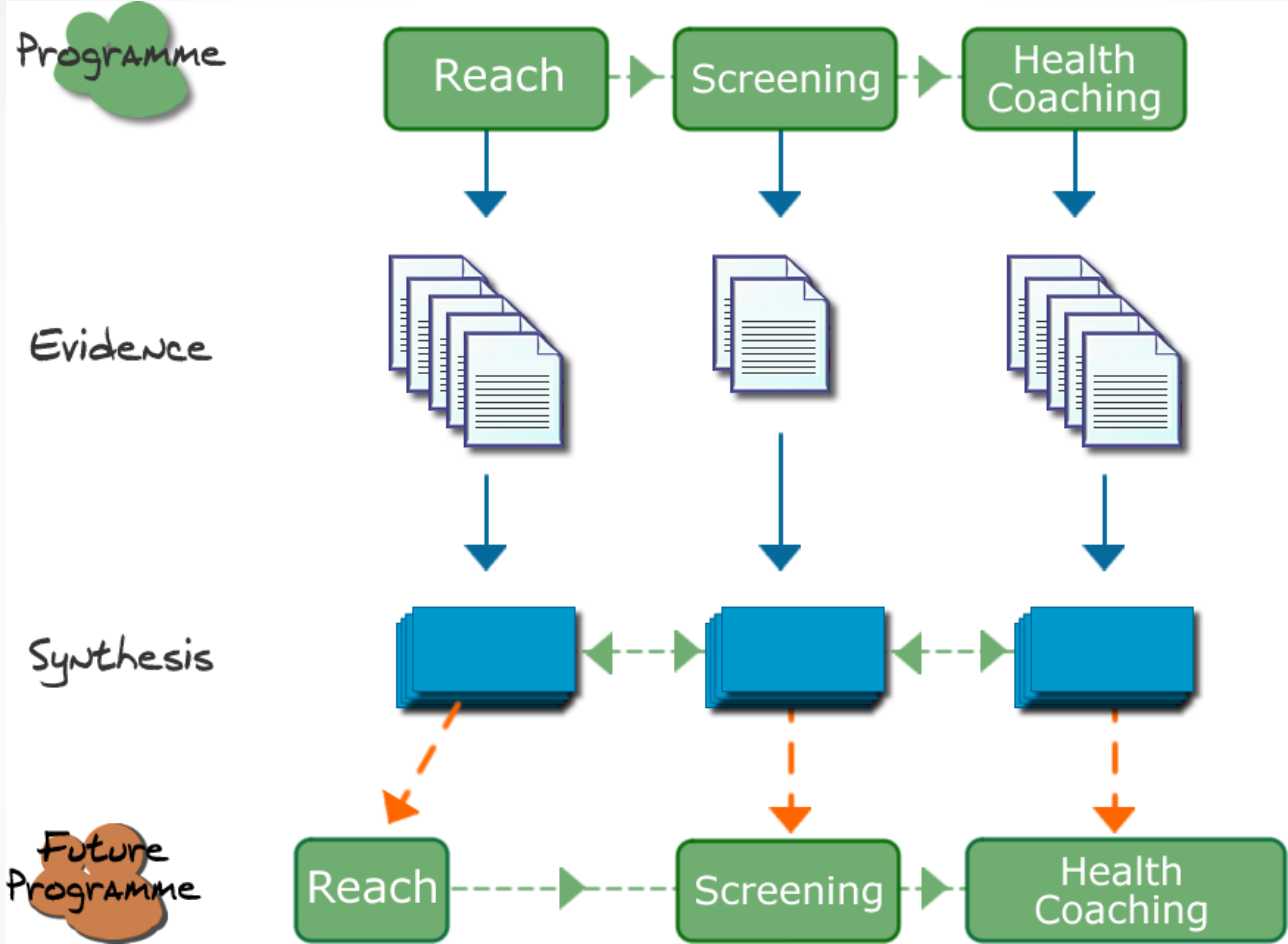
Repeated Evaluations



Systematic Review

Future Programme





A Ten Step approach to Evaluation

A INTERVENTION THEORY AND DEVELOPING EXPECTATIONS OF IMPACTS OVER TIME

- The key components of the complex intervention
- The program theory of the complex intervention
- Learning from the Evidence Base
- The anticipated timeline of impact

B LEARNING FRAMEWORKS AND PATHWAYS OF INFLUENCE

- The pathways of influence of an evaluation
- Learning framework for the evaluation

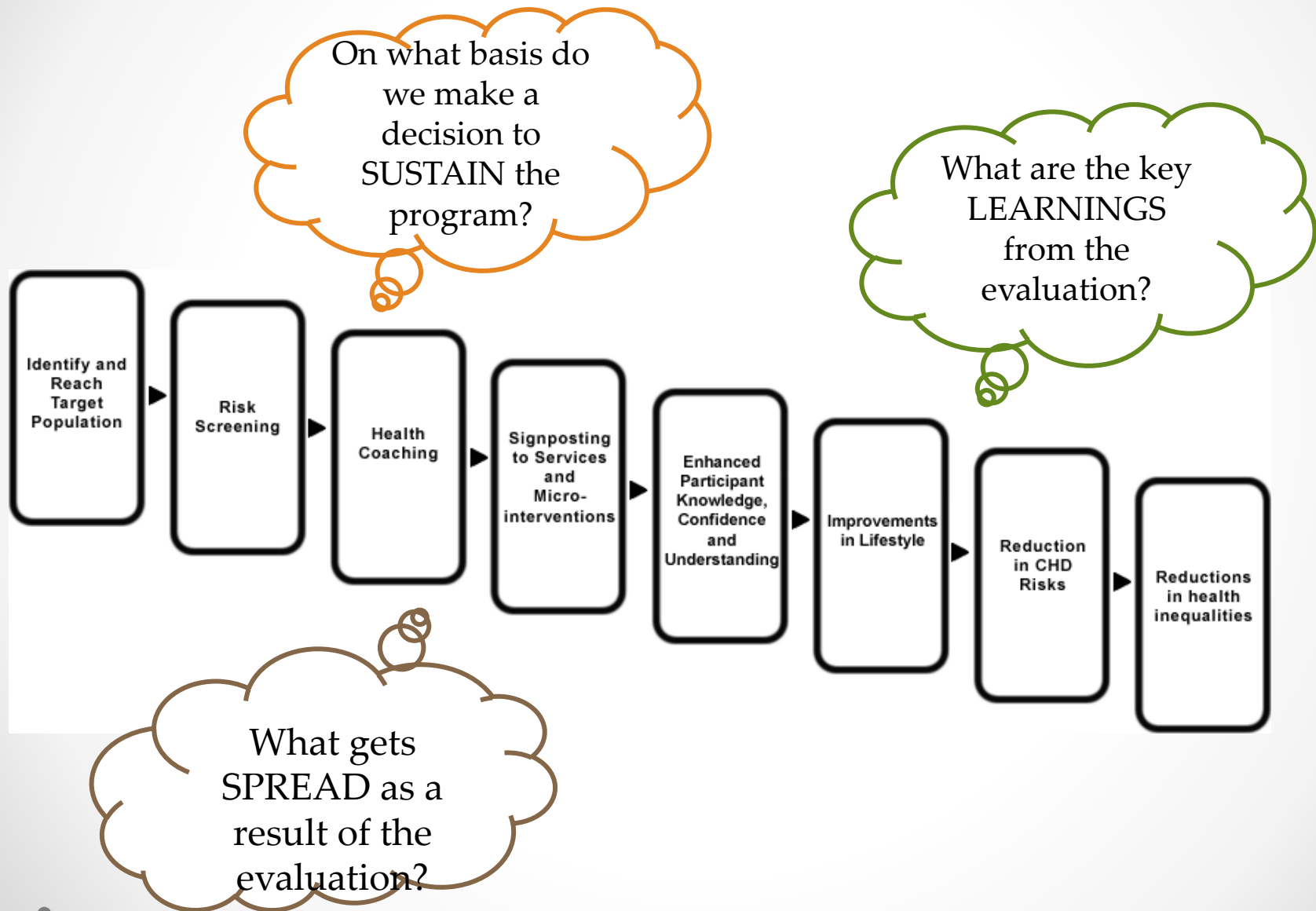
C IMPACTS AND LEARNING

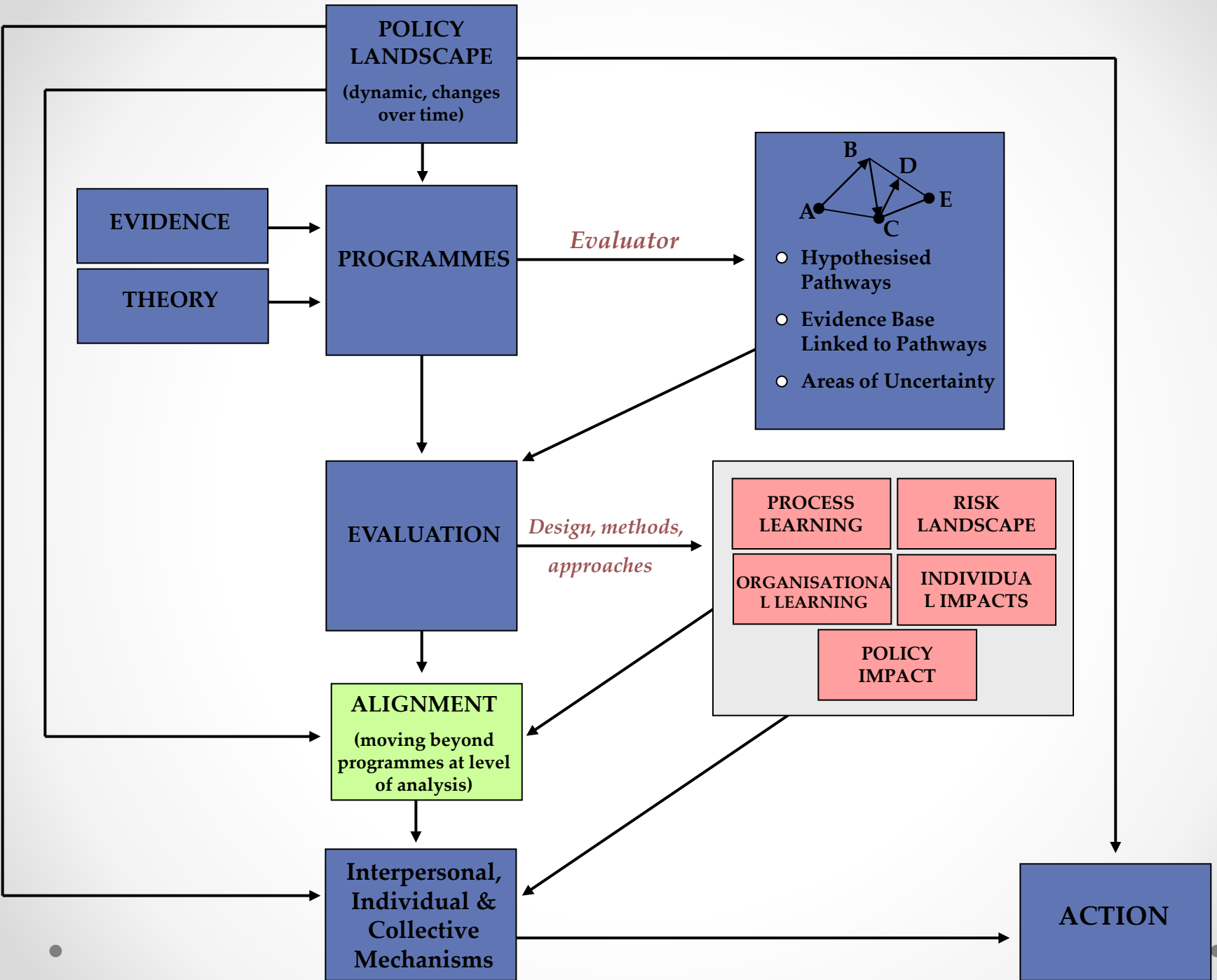
- Assessing the impact of the intervention: **DESIGN**
- Learning about the intervention over time

D SPREAD AND SUSTAINABILITY

- Spreading learning from an evaluation
- Reflections on performance and sustainability

An Example: Primary Prevention Have a Heart Paisley





Models of Causation
(Successionist vs.
Generative Models
of Causation)

Ecology of
Evidence

Program Theory
and
Incompleteness

Integrating
Knowledge
Translation with
evaluation

Capacity
Building

Time Horizons
and Functional
forms

Developmental
evaluation in
Complex
Dynamic
Settings

Portfolio of
designs
and approaches

Spread, Scaling
up and
Generalization

Managing
Evaluations

Introduction to
Evaluation

Communication

Evaluation
Approaches

Ethics and
Standards

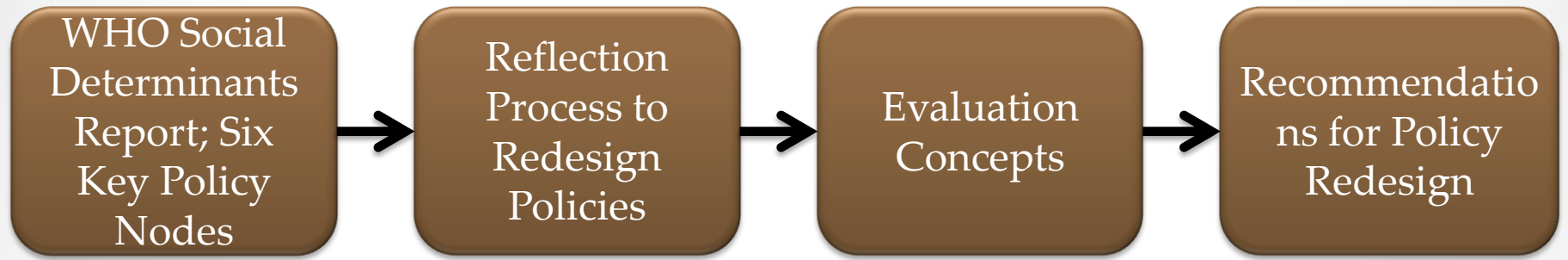
Specific
Evaluation
Problem to
be addressed

Evaluation
Design

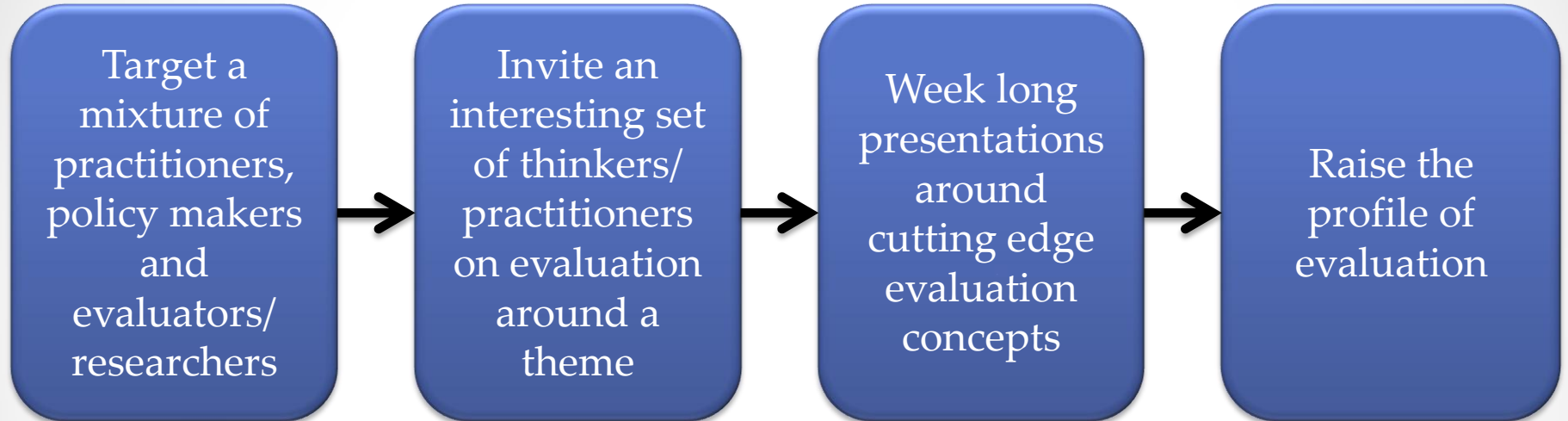
Quantitative
Methods

Qualitative
Methods

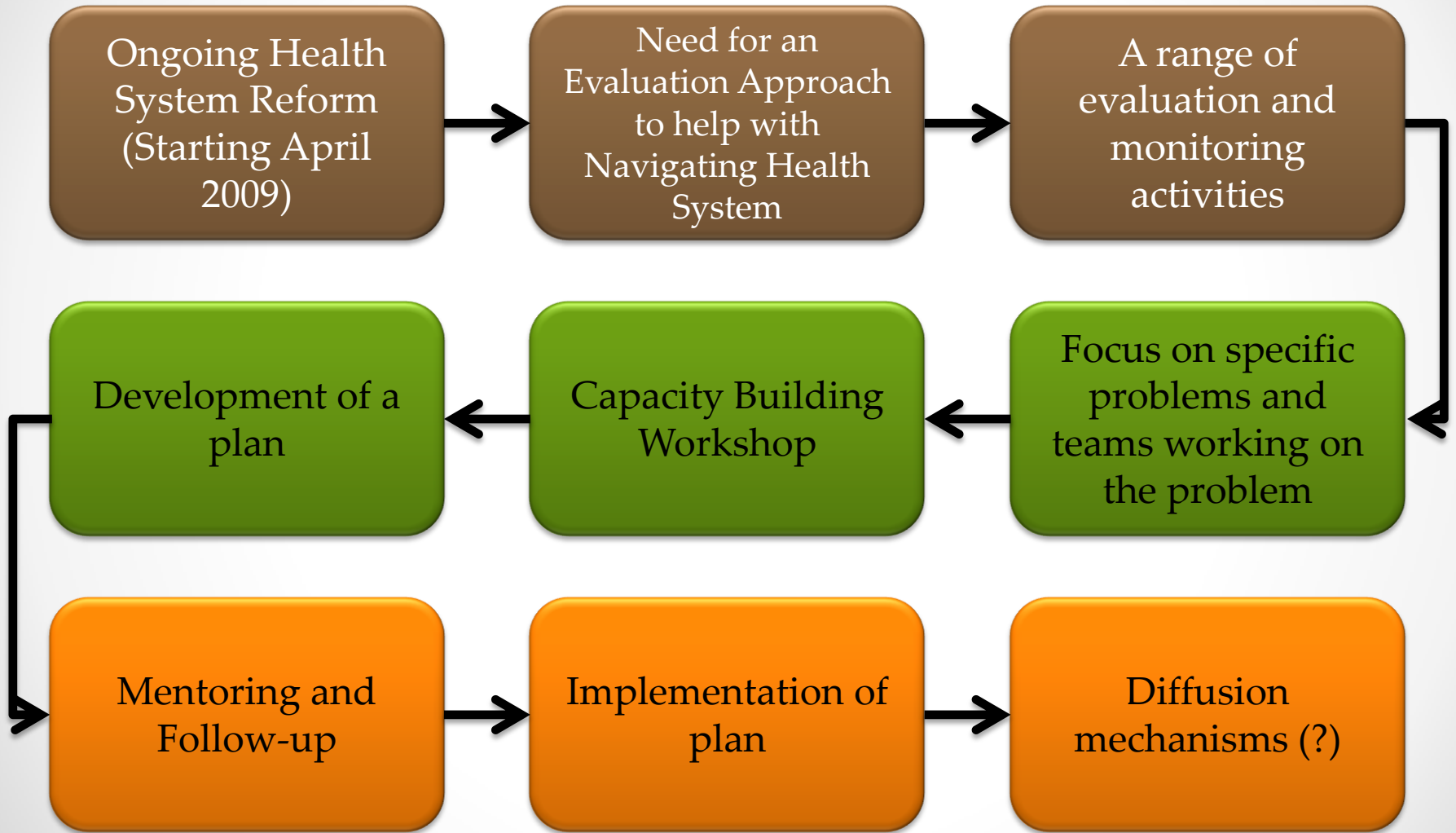
Model 1: Chile Redesign of Policies



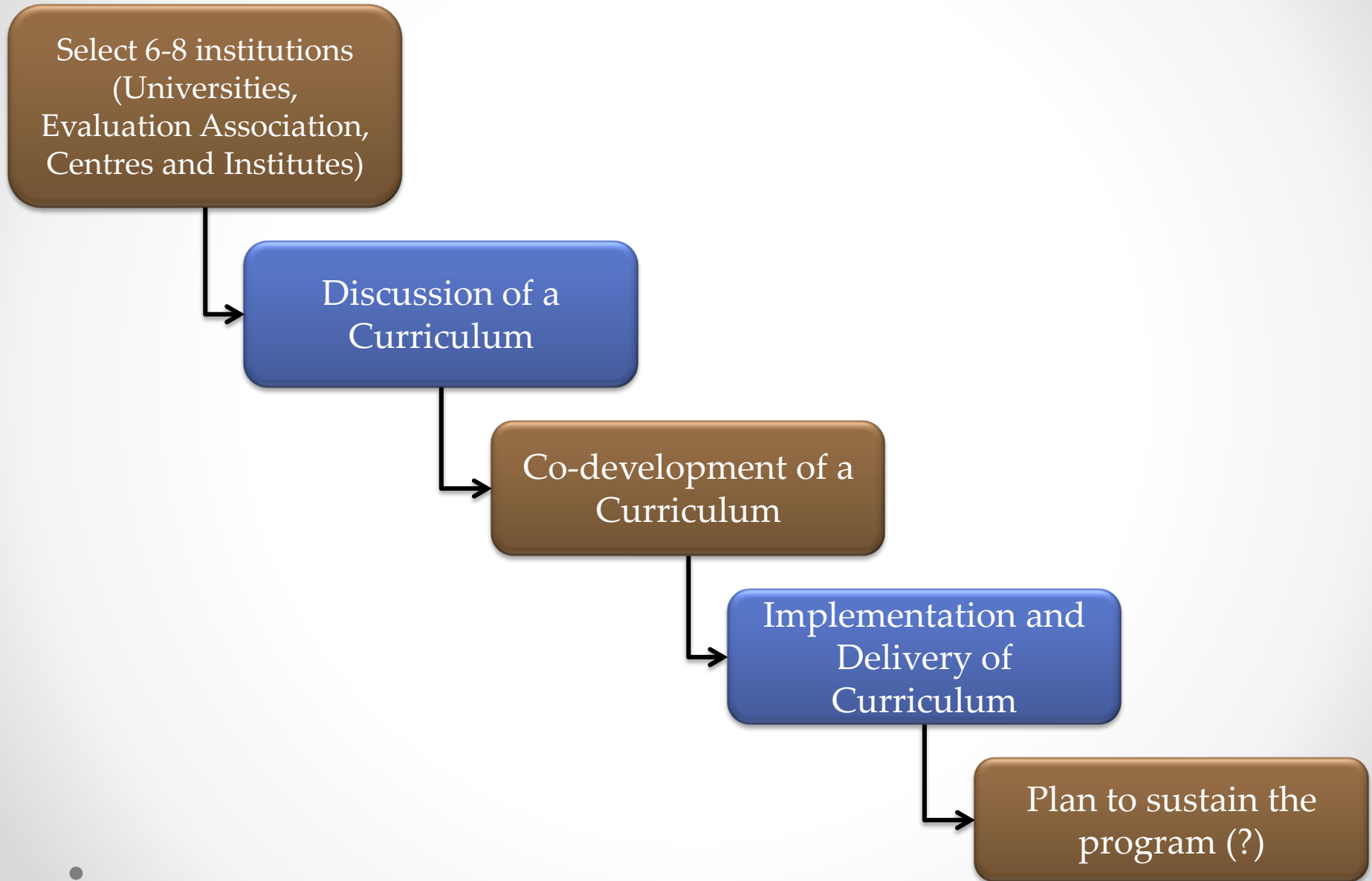
Model 2: Edinburgh Evaluation Summer School



Model 3: China Health Systems Reform



Model 4: Teaching Evaluation in S. Asia



Model 5: People's Uni Evaluation Module

