Establishing
Outputs→ Impacts
Are we Miracle Workers?
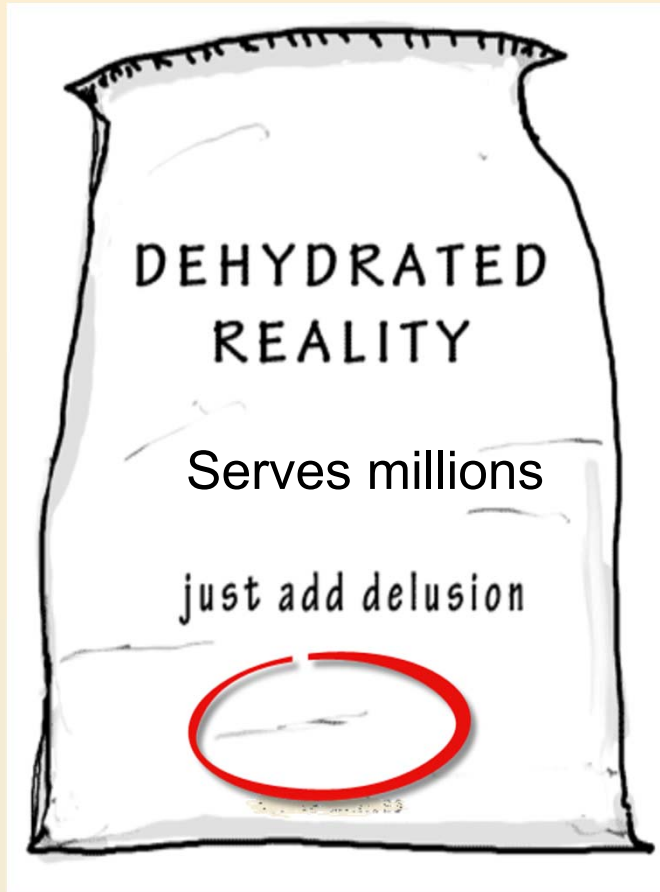
Ian Patrick and Anne Markiewicz

Evaluator Determines Impact!

DEHYDRATED REALITY

Serves millions

just add delusion

Objectives of Workshop

1. Explore common dilemmas facing evaluators when tasked by donors/funders to establish 'impact' level results

2. Discuss evaluation approaches that more effectively and realistically establish results by focussing on 'Outcome' rather than 'Impact' assessment

3. Explore approaches for negotiating realistic and achievable expectations with clients/donors for evaluation processes and results.
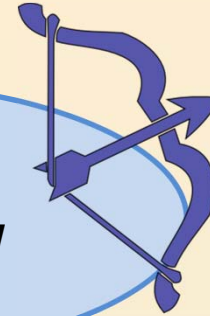
Scenarios

REACHING FOR THE STARS

Quest to establish high level results to show program has made a difference to the state/country/world
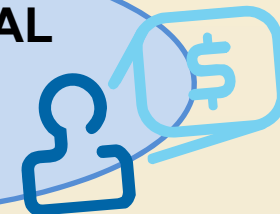
THE LONG BOW

Striving to establish long term results from short term programs

TUNNEL VISION

Focussing on the program in isolation from the stakeholders/partners that contribute to change

THE FINANCIAL PLANNER

Limited perception of impact being quantifiable benefit derived from application of funding, often with associated narrow use of technical methodologies

Scenario 1: "Reaching for the Stars"
## Population/High Level Results

- Evaluation of community-based diversion program supporting Indigenous offenders (3 year funded)
- Government policy to reduce rates of incarceration of Indigenous offenders
- Evaluation expected to identify extent to which program achieved population level reduction in incarceration rates of Indigenous people
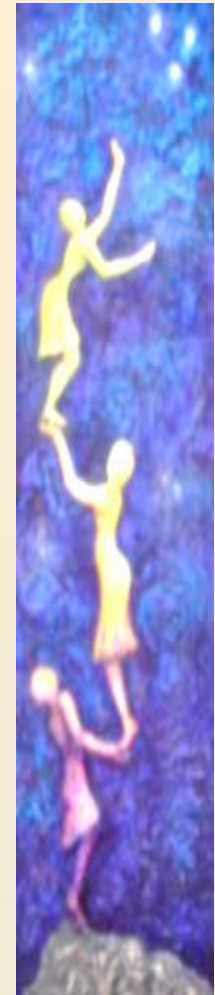
Risks of Reaching for the Stars

- Results may not be visible during the time frame of the evaluation or program

- Population level trends are evident over extended frames

- Issues of attribution and causality: even if changes occur at the population level, can they be attributed to the program? Are other contextual factors at play?

- Factors outside control of program may be working against achieving desired impacts
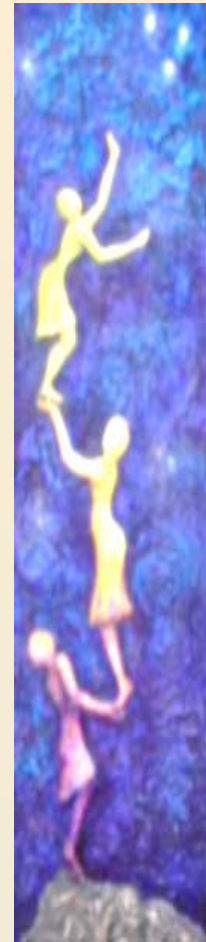
Scenario 2: "The Long Bow"

Identification of Long term results

- Program supports students from a developing country to complete Masters studies at Universities in developed country

- Aim for students to return and contribute in senior executive level positions to their organisations

- Evaluation TOR specifies identification of results for students in supporting these ends

- Evaluation not able to easily track transitions over the longer-term (5 years +) when such results may be evident

Risks of The Long Bow

- Evaluations not often funded for use of longitudinal tracking methodologies

- Longitudinal methodologies expensive to support

- Issues of attribution as many factors will affect a life course beyond just the program

- Significant drop-off in longitudinal tracking methodologies, usually from the more at-risk groups, which results in biased sample

Scenario 3: "Tunnel Vision"
Focus on program as the agent of change

- Program aimed at improving participation of 'at-risk' children in early childhood, pre-school programs

- Focus of evaluation TOR is on program results in achieving increased enrolments in pre-school programs

- Program is dependent upon the work of multiple partner agencies in order to achieve its results

Risks of Tunnel Vision

- Contribution of program partners is obscured by focus on assessing net-results achieved by individual program

- Systems operate synergistically and inter-dependently

Scenario 4: "The Financial Planner"

Technical evaluation methodology focused on establishing cost-benefit

- Micro-Enterprise program funded for 5 years in a developing country context

- Evaluation TOR requires methodology to establish value of initiative in monetary returns

- Highly technical evaluation methodology developed to translate program costs to benefits achieved in monetary terms

- Methodology used establishes metric ratios of cost-benefits

Risks of The Financial Planner

- Findings, though potentially meeting donor needs, may not be easily accessible to program or communities involved in project
- Evaluation process adopted does not readily facilitate refection/learning for purposes of program improvement

Alternative Perspectives

REFLECT ON IMPACT

Clarify understandings and refine terminology – about the nature of impact
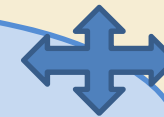
DECOMPRESS TIME

Clarify that change occurs over short/medium and longer-term time frames, in a cumulative although complex manner

REMEMBER OTHERS

Recognise and focus on stakeholders/partners that contribute to change and measure change at their level

ADOPT PLURALIST APPROACHES

Promote use of mixed methods approaches that encompass needs to measure change and identify results

Alternative Perspectives

- Reflect on Impact
- Decompress Time
- Remember Others
- Pluralist Approaches

- Focus analysis at the immediate/intermediate outcome level
- Program Theory & Program Logic to map likely associations over time
- Participatory approaches to validate likely associations
- Different outcomes for different stakeholders and who is responsible for them
- Multi-method evaluation

1. Reflect on Impact

"Impact" Implies	Reality Involves
Cause & Effect	More open and interactive systems
Positive, intended results	Unexpected, positive and negative results occur
Focus on ultimate results	Upstream effects are important
Credits a single contributor	Multiple actors create results & need credit
Story ends with program obtains success	Change process never ends

2. Decompress Time

- **Program Theory**: conceptual representation of the theory of how change will occur based on research, literature & practice experience

- **Program Logic**: an operational graphic representation of that theory that details resources, planned activities, outputs and outcomes over time that reflect the intended results

EVEN *miracles* TAKE A LITTLE TIME

Cinderella

Use Time in Logic Models

| Deliverables	Immediate and Medium Term Results	Longer Term Results
Activities Outputs	Outcomes	Impacts

Time

3. Remember Others

- Recognise and focus on stakeholders/partners that contribute to change, measuring change at their level

- Use **key stakeholder/program partners** to validate the extent of their contribution to the program logic

Community Based Diversion Program for Indigenous Offenders
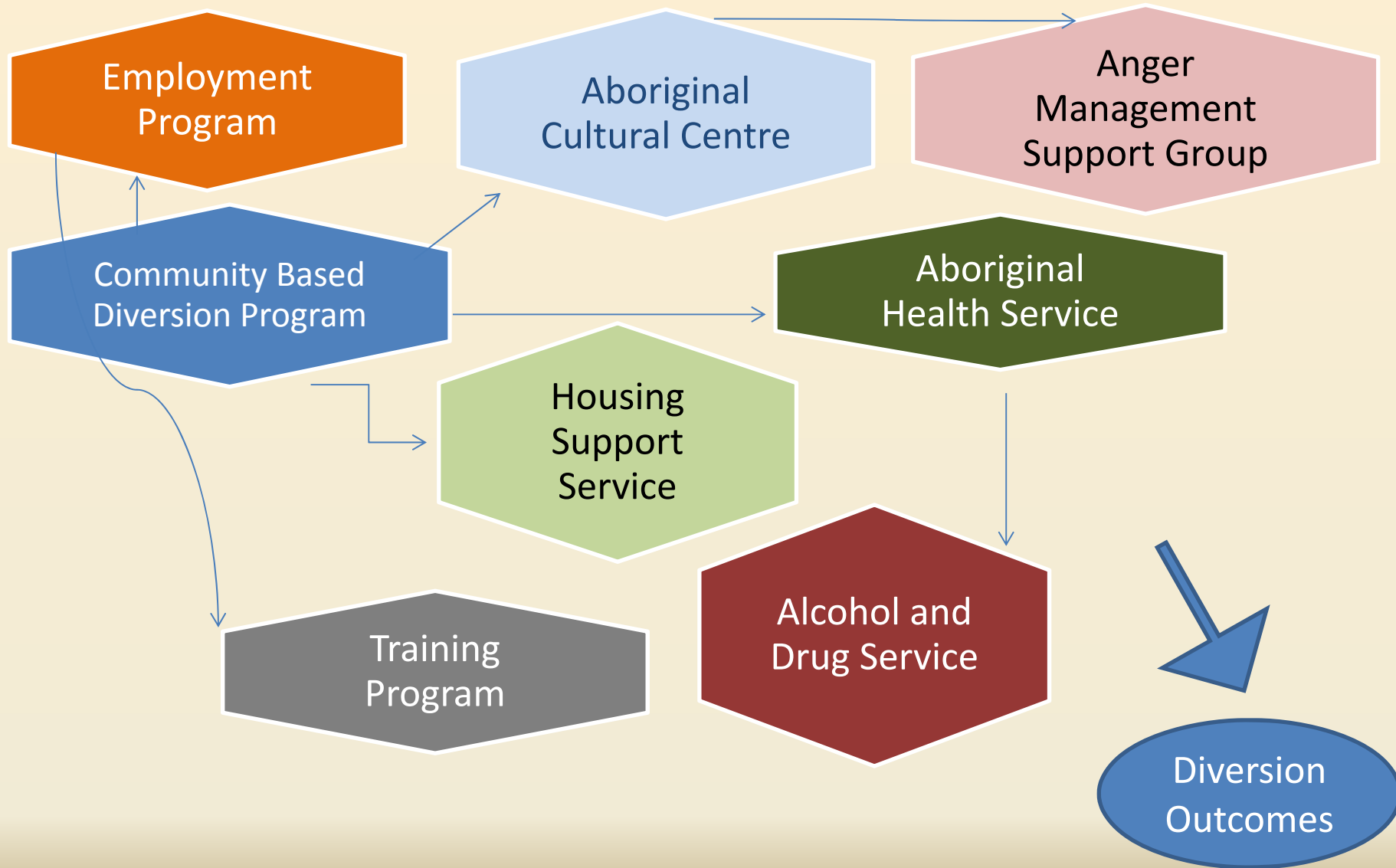
4. Pluralist Approaches

APPROACHES

METHODS

- Randomised Control Trials
- Matched Comparisons
- Social Return on Investment
- Longitudinal studies
- Case Studies
- Appreciative Enquiry
- Contribution Analysis
- Outcome Mapping
- Realist Evaluation
- Most Significant Change Method
- Developmental Evaluation

QUANTITATIVE

Surveys

Census Data

Pre-Post Rankings

QUALITATIVE

Focus Groups

Interviews

Workshops

Negotiating Expectations….

You must provide an indication of high level results and long term changes for this program including a cost-benefit analysis

How about instead we develop a robust theory of change and program logic, tracking progress over time against identified short-medium term outcomes validated by key stakeholders, and we acknowledge the contribution of our key partners to the results?

Small Group Exercise

Funder

Evaluator

Discuss these alternate approaches to the challenge of identifying impact in the context of the Four Scenarios presented

- How would client/donor expectations be negotiated?

- How could evaluation approaches be developed to accommodate their concerns?

Large Group Discussion