



Building Capacity for Evaluation Use in USAID The Road to Best Fit

Road to Best Fit

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USAID/Senegal



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What do we mean by Better Fit?

- Complement standard practices
- Narrative-based
- Complexity-aware (non-predictive)
- Participatory



How does it fit together?

Improve evaluation quality and increase use

Build on investments:

- Complexity-aware trials
- Identified practical M&E challenges
- Tested emerging methodologies



Facilitated dialogues

- Situational analysis
- Identify primary users
- Information needs

**Principles and Methods
recommendations**

**Participatory design
workshop**

**Targeted TA supports
implementation of
emerging approaches**



Activities



Use of Evaluation Findings

- Assessment of evaluation needs
- Participation of primary evaluation users throughout the evaluation process,
- Good communication between the project and the evaluation users, and
- Focus on actionable data



A Mission Perspective

- **Capture unanticipated outcomes or causal pathways that were not explicitly stated in the design**
- **Share knowledge among broad set of stakeholders**
- **Capacity-building for Mission and project participants**
- **Gain experience**
 - **Familiarity with process and requirements: logistics, time, human resources**
 - **Test level of rigor and Mission relevance**
- **Set the stage for more adaptive management approaches and respond to interest from multiple Mission teams**

— The Consultative Process: Donor Planning Processes Build Foundations for Evaluation Use



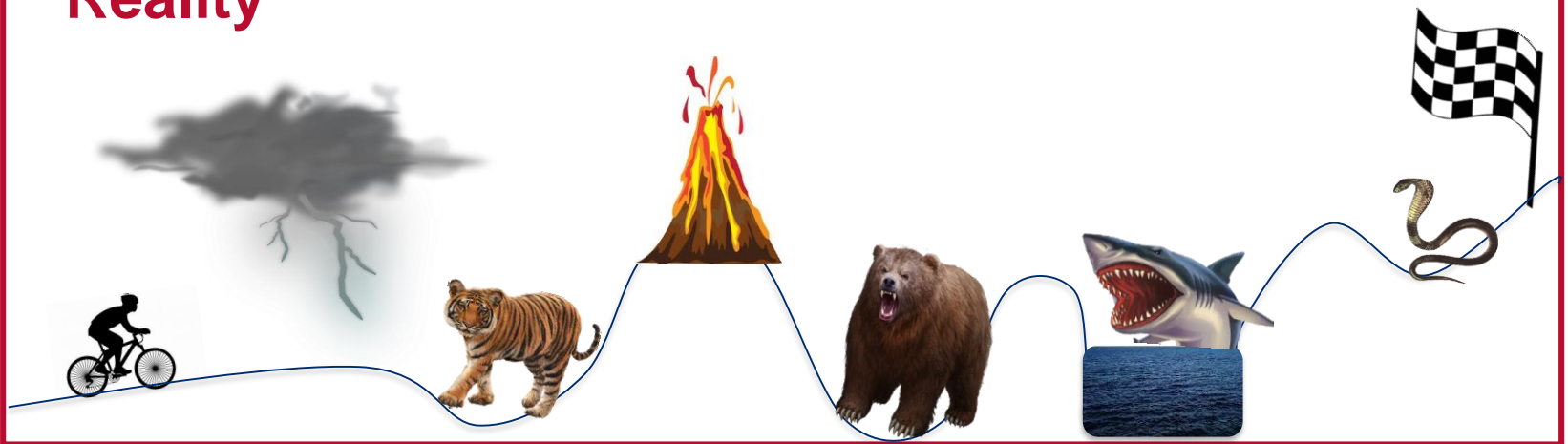
Your Plan



Your Plan



Reality



Supporting Agency Innovators

- Staff have been exploring new approaches to meet M&E challenges in complexity
- Working alone, innovators faced challenges
- Working together, we developed ways to support successful implementation of emerging approaches



Lesson: Gap in Technical Knowledge

New M&E approaches to meet new info needs in complexity



M&E innovators needed help:

- Prioritizing information needs related to complexity
- Articulating M&E questions
- Selecting approaches to answer questions

Lesson: Tackling Communication Challenges



- Multiple M&E users across organizations
- Turn-over
- Conflicting and changing info priorities
- New technical jargon
- How much M&E is enough?

Technical solutions through facilitated dialogue



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Six Questions to Help Identify Your Monitoring and/or Evaluation Need

This worksheet is a starting point for identifying gaps in your current monitoring system and/or evaluation plans. The questions below will help you outline the purpose, scope and intended uses for monitoring and/or evaluations that go beyond standard requirements and further facilitate decision making.

Questions to Consider	Operating Unit (OU) Response
<p>Question 1: What is the activity or project meant to do? (Description of Activity/Project)</p> <p><i>Guiding sub-questions:</i></p> <p>Who is the main target group of the activity/project?</p> <p>What changes or improvements is the activity/project aiming to bring about for the target group?</p> <p>How is the activity/project contributing to the desired changes? What interventions does it use?</p>	



Tool Developed: Six Simple Questions

- Identify **who** will use the data and **how** it will be used
- Understand users' **information needs** related to complexity
- Reach agreement on **priority M&E questions**
- Explore **opportunities** and **constraints**

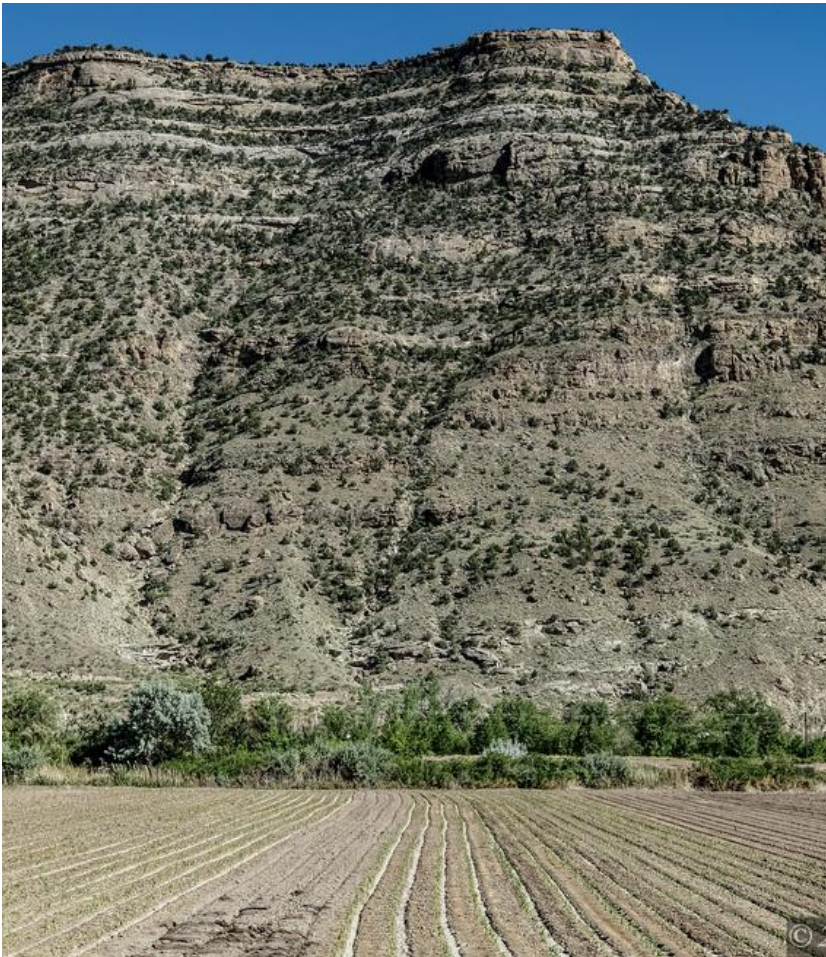


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Lesson: Importance of Enabling Environment



Tool Developed: Assessing the Enabling Environment

- Checklist guided conversations with those seeking to use emerging M&E approaches
- Aided reflection over several interactions with potential M&E users





Our Challenge

- Instill new tools and processes throughout the Agency
- Build the capacity of M&E specialists across the USAID to identify opportunities for emerging M&E approaches
- Coach evaluation users through the initial consultations

Our Solution

Consultation Process Workshop for M&E Specialists

- Role-play cases
- Use tools to facilitate decision-making by evaluation planners
- Identify common communication challenges
- Practice soft-skills
- Learn more about emerging approaches



Workshop is about talking more than tools!

Facilitation Skills

- Understanding monitoring data user and intended data uses
- Understanding project context and enabling conditions for M&E



Tools & Technical Skills

- Matching methods to questions
- Knowledge of methods



Result

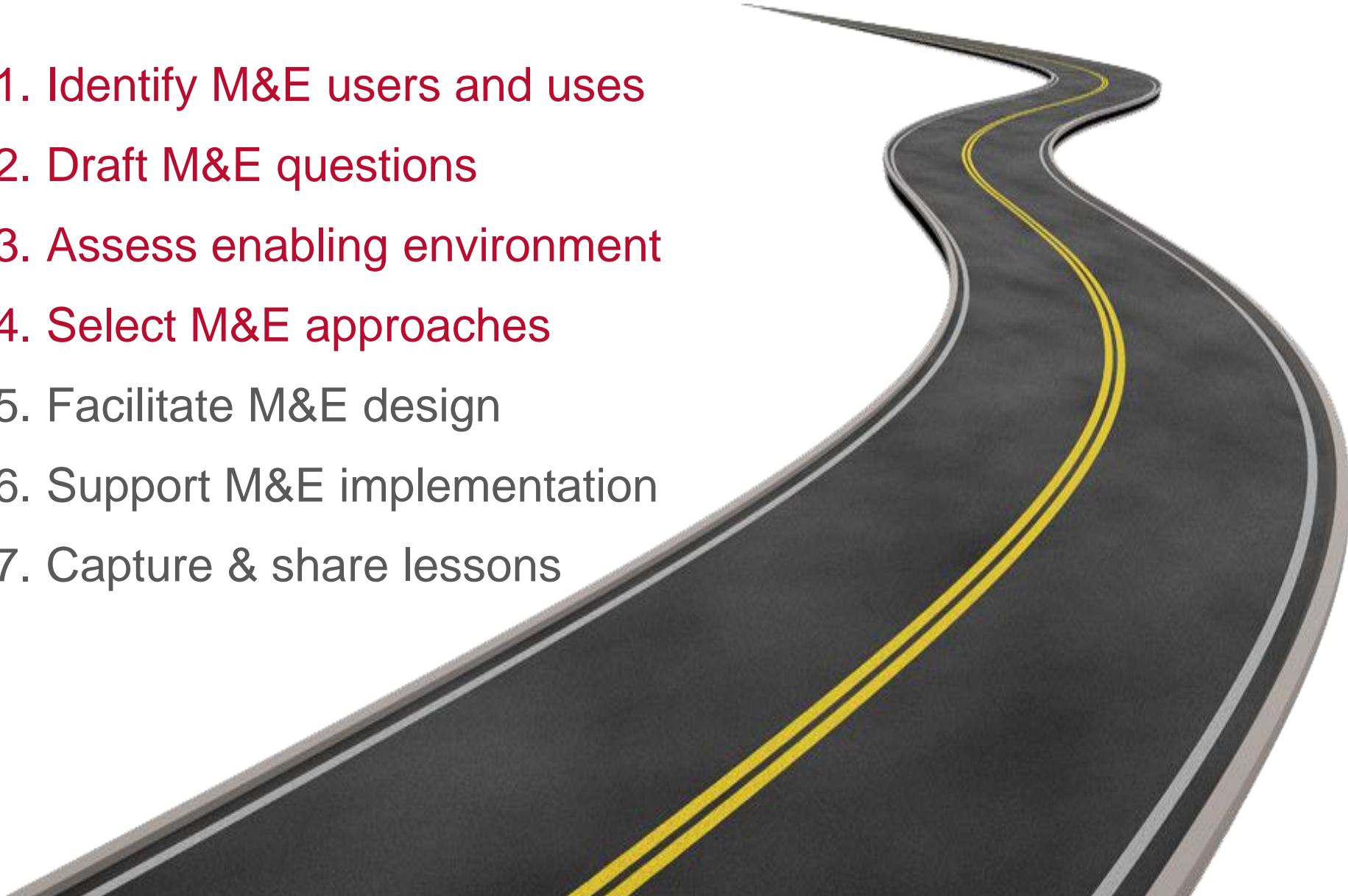


M&E specialists are better prepared to:

- Facilitate consensus on M&E priorities with users
- Identify questions suited to emerging M&E approaches
- Assess an enabling environment for emerging M&E approaches
- Coach M&E users on defining focus and scope for emerging approaches

The Road to Best Fit: Supporting Use of Emerging M&E Approaches

1. Identify M&E users and uses
2. Draft M&E questions
3. Assess enabling environment
4. Select M&E approaches
5. Facilitate M&E design
6. Support M&E implementation
7. Capture & share lessons

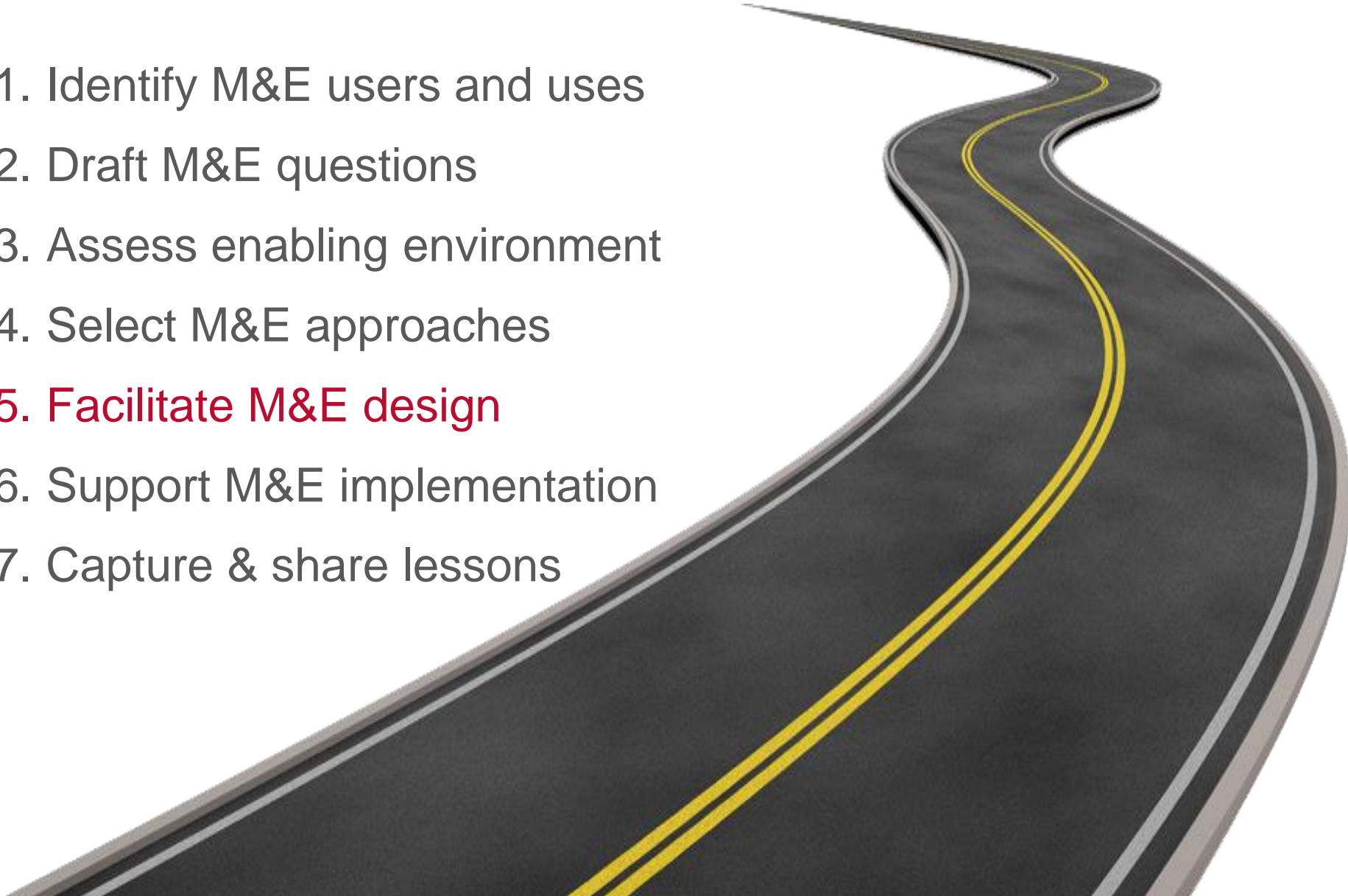


— Participatory Design Engages Diverse Evaluation Users



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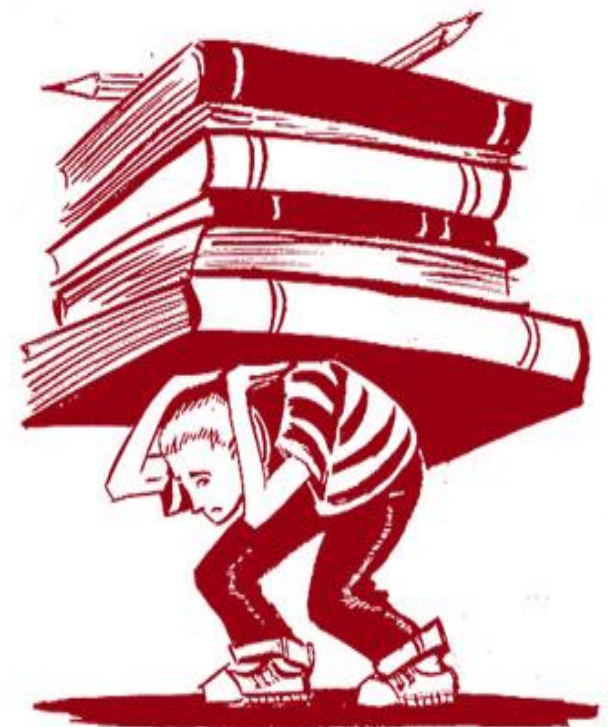
**An emerging approach is part
of an MEL system**



Our Challenge

Incorporating emerging methods into MEL systems

- Multiple users rely on MEL system
- Information needs unclear and unmet
- Complexity in intervention and context poorly understood
- Emerging approaches not matched to info needs
- Too many methods
- Not ready to respond to new info needs



Our Solution

A participatory workshop with M&E users

- Agree on priority information needs
- Understand complexity in intervention and context
- Align emerging MEL approaches to complexity in intervention and context
- Increase capacity for adaptively managing MEL system

Idea to Design Clinic

Users agree on priority information needs



Users & Uses



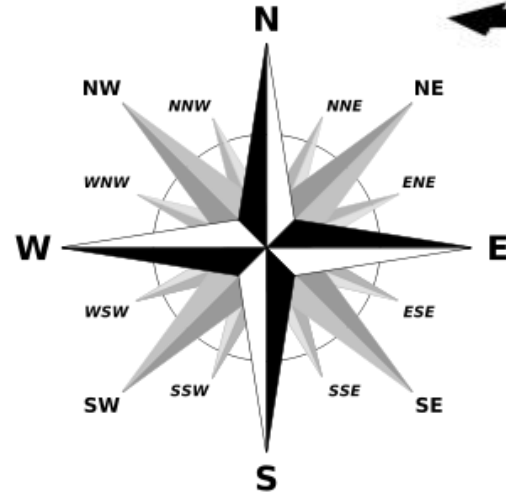
M&E Purposes



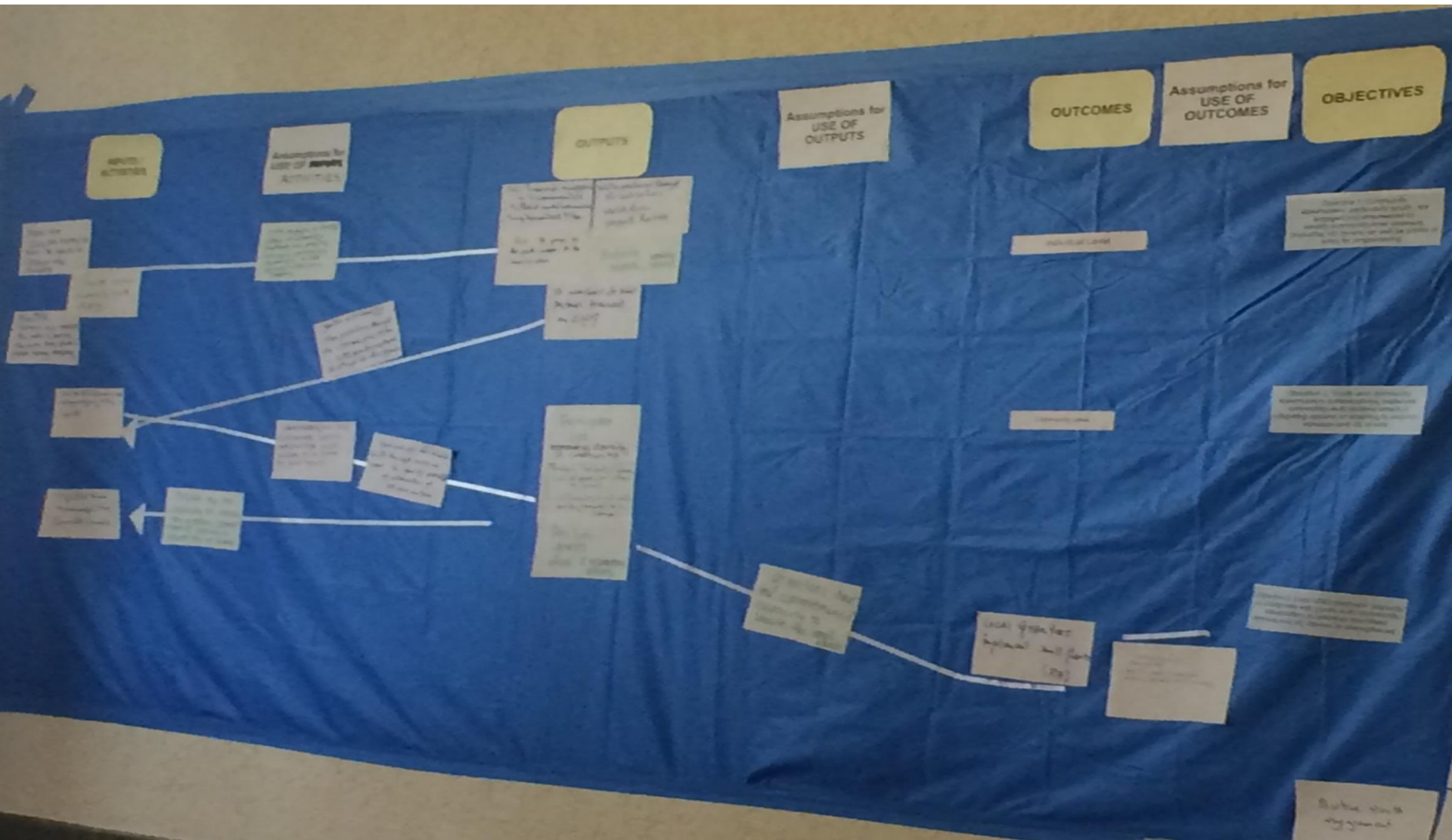
M&E Questions



Methods & Tools



Complexity-aware logic model aids MEL design



A complexity-aware logic model helps users identify info needs related to -

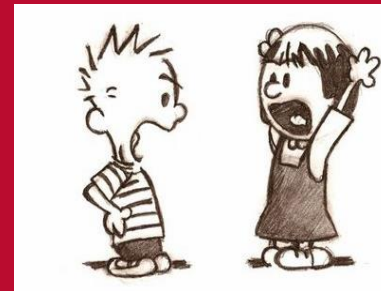
Low causal certainty

What outcomes are emerging?
What gaps in the causal paths?



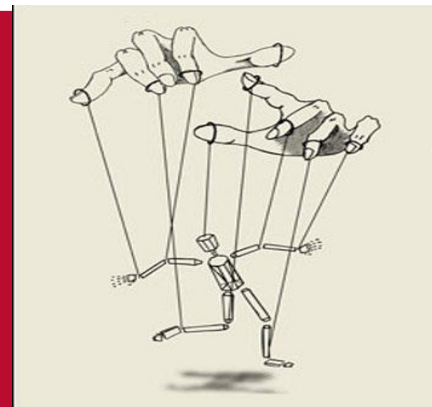
Diverse perspectives

How stakeholders view
intervention and situation



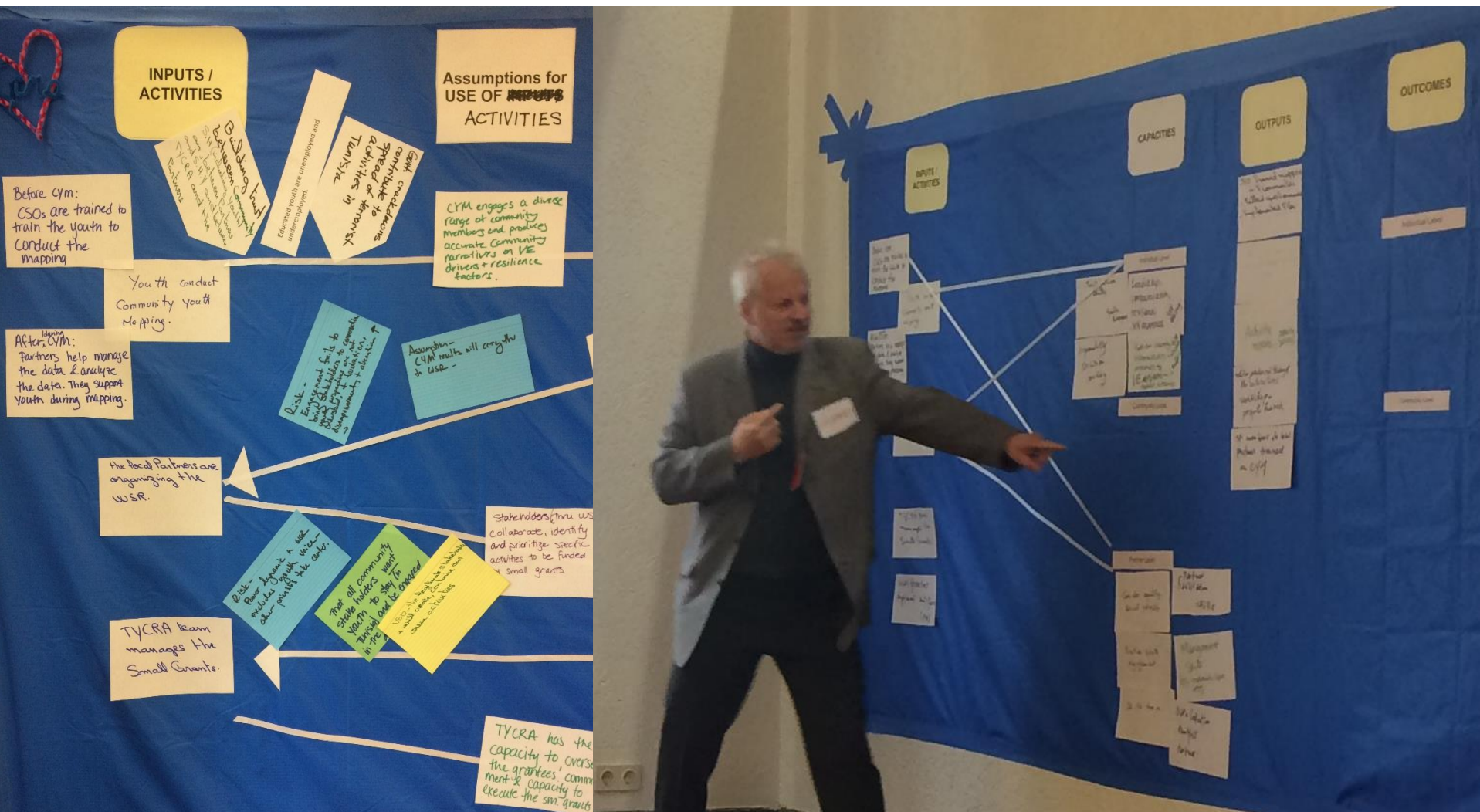
Contextual factors

Likely to influence intervention



Complexity-aware logic model aids design

We can pinpoint opportunity for emerging method



Best-fit & Right-size

The emerging approach fits into
a streamlined MEL system



MEL system ready to inform adaptive management
Team ready to respond to emerging MEL needs



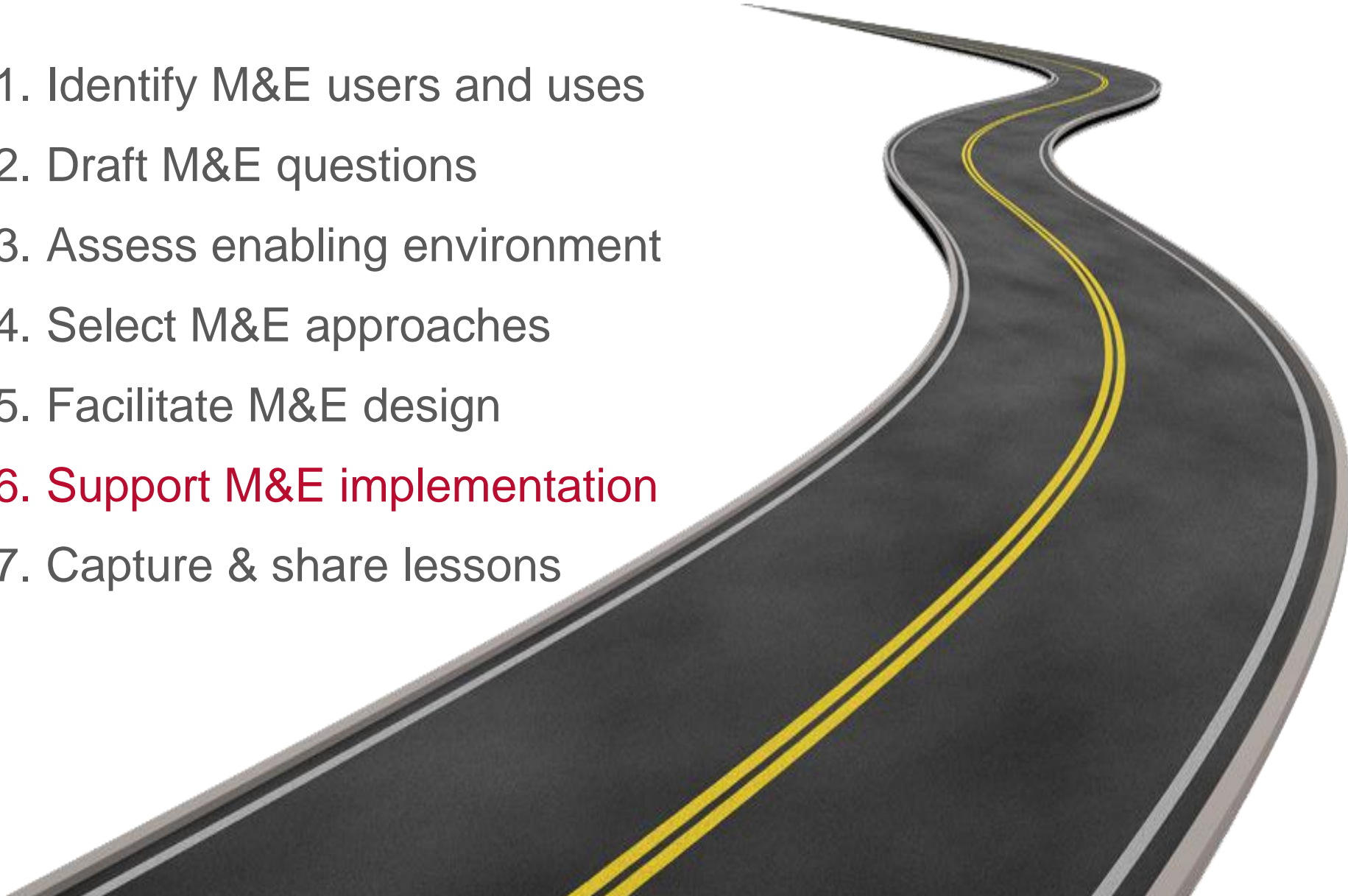
Clinic Results

- Users agree on priority information needs
- MEL Plan draft ready to inform adaptive management
- Capacity in focusing and scoping emerging MEL approaches
- Team ready to manage MEL system adaptively



The Road to Best Fit: Supporting Use of Emerging M&E Approaches

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7. Capture & share lessons





COLLABORATIVE CAPACITY BUILDING FOR EVALUATION USE: AN EXAMPLE OF OUTCOME HARVESTING IN SENEGAL

How the “road to best fit” process was operationalized in USAID/Senegal through an innovative collaboration

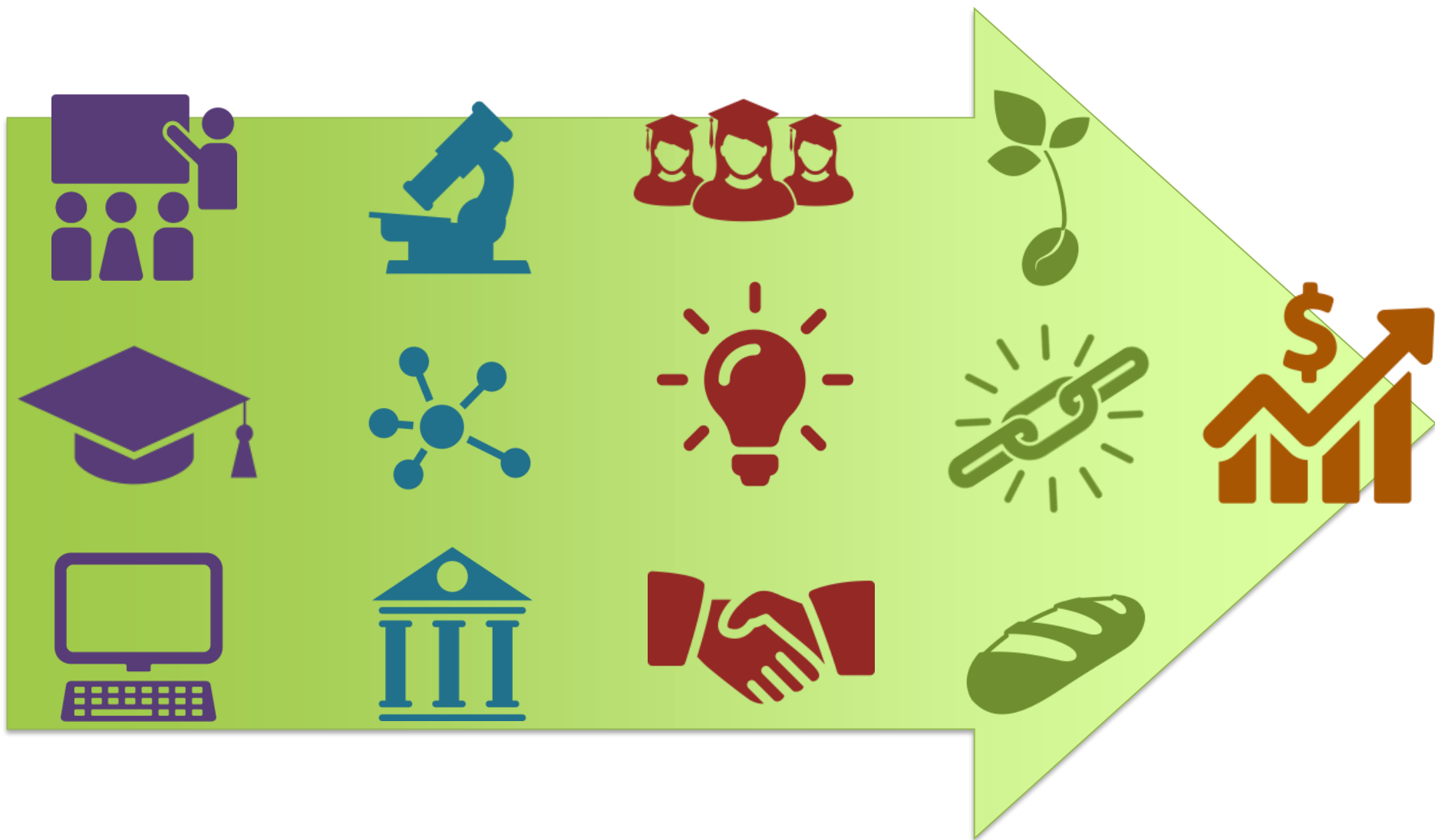
THOMAS ARCHIBALD, *Virginia Tech*

GOELE SCHEERS, *Independent Consultant*

RONIT GERARD, *USAID*

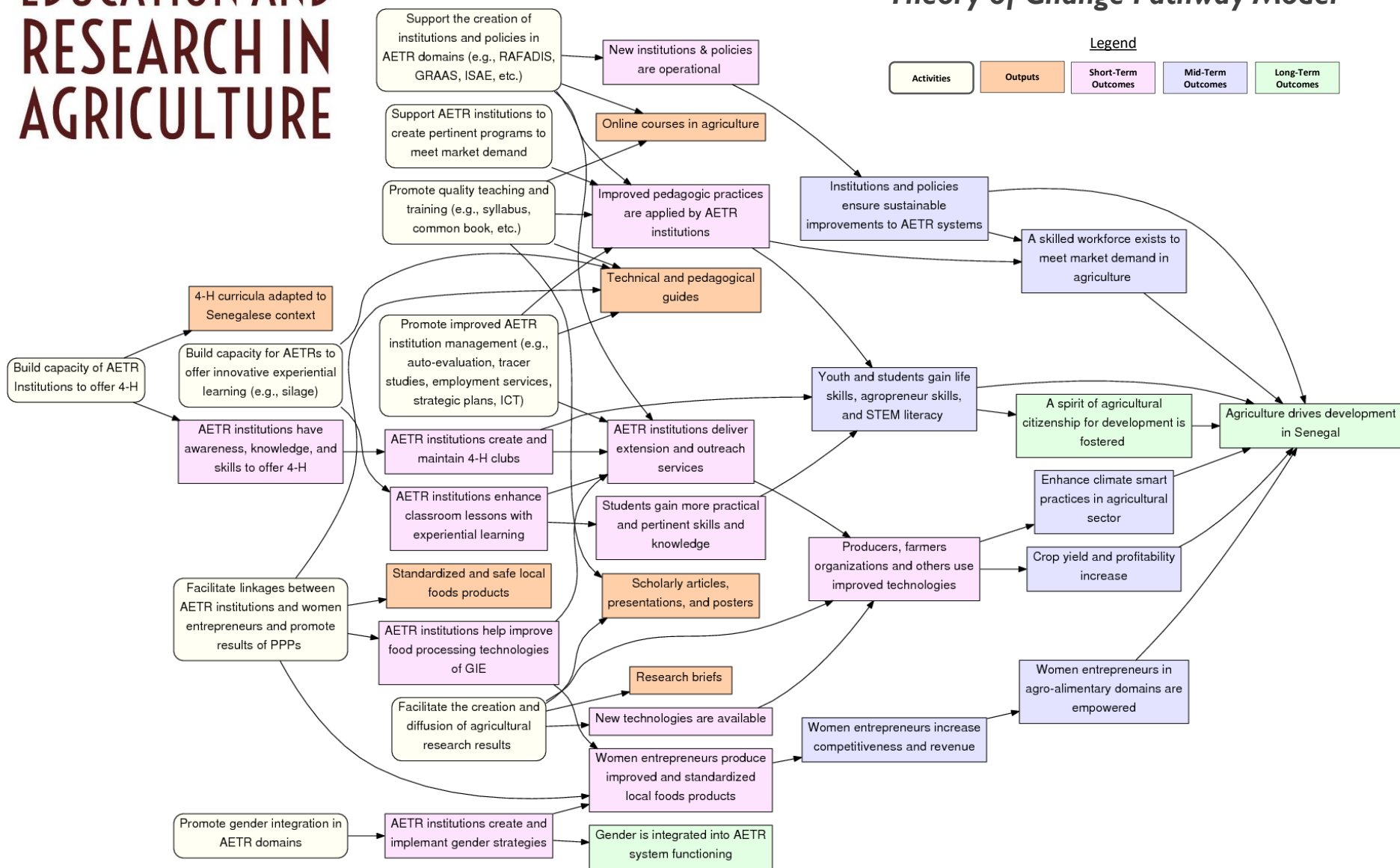
PROJECT OVERVIEW: USAID/ERA

- USAID/Senegal's **Education and Research in Agriculture (ERA)** project is implemented by Virginia Tech
- **ERA Project Objective:** Develop human and institutional capacity in Agricultural Education, Training, and Research (AETR) institutions. To strengthen:
 1. Agricultural Education and Training
 2. Applied Research and Outreach
 3. Project Management and Policy Support
- 2010-2018, with three U.S. university partners and 13 Senegalese institutional partners (universities, vocational training centers, an agricultural high school, research institutes, etc.)



EDUCATION AND RESEARCH IN AGRICULTURE

Theory of Change Pathway Model



USAID/SENEGAL'S JOURNEY (reminder)

- Desire to capture unanticipated outcomes that were not explicitly stated in the design
- Desire to share knowledge among broad set of stakeholders
- Capacity-building for ERA participants
- Capacity-building for Mission, gain experience piloting this methodology
- Set the stage for more adaptive management approaches and respond to groundswell of interest from multiple teams within the Mission

USAID/ERA'S JOURNEY

- **Context of complexity** (per Six Simple Questions Worksheet)



VERSION 2.0 | DECEMBER 2013

This worksheet is a starting point for the design of a trial of a complexity-aware monitoring approach. The questions below help you outline the purpose, scope and intended uses for the trial. The Complexity-Aware M&E Team will work with you throughout the design process.

Education and Research in Agriculture (ERA), USAID/Senegal
Virginia Tech Office of International Research, Education, and Development (OIRE)

Discussion Note

Complexity-Aware Monitoring

Monitoring & Evaluation Series

<p>Description of Project</p> <p>Who is the project's main target group?</p> <p>What changes or improvements is the project being used to bring about for the target group?</p> <p>How is the project contributing to the desired changes? What activities does it use?</p>	<p>- ERA works to strengthen human and institutional capacity in agricultural education, training, research, and outreach institutions in Senegal, so that they can better create, connect, and use relevant agricultural knowledge to contribute to economic growth through agriculture.</p> <p>- Our main target stakeholders include: administrators, faculty, researchers, staff, and students at our 12 Senegalese institutional partners; Senegalese government officials related to our institutional partners; and small and medium enterprises (GIEs etc.), producer associations, and producers that connect with our institutions.</p> <p>- Modelled in part after the U.S. land grant university model, our main project activities include: Support for 5 interdisciplinary, multi-institutional applies research and extension platforms; long-term training (scholarships) for 120 post-secondary agriculture students in Senegal and 20 Senegalese Master's Degree students sent to U.S. land grant universities; short-term trainings on pedagogical innovations, outreach and extension approaches, good management practices for education and training institutions, etc.; creation of a university-based program to engage youth in agriculture and entrepreneurship (modeled after 4-H in the U.S.); creation of public-private partnerships between universities and GIEs working in value-added processing of local cereals and fruits; creation of a national reflection group on agricultural and agro-alimentary education, research, and outreach issues; and investment in some infrastructure for our partner institutions.</p> <p>✶ Cause and effect are poorly understood thereby making it difficult to identify solutions and draft detailed implementation plans in advance.</p> <p>Change in human and institutional capacity is slow, distal, and mediated by numerous variables which may or may not be immediately apparent.</p>
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1. Sentinel Indicators
2. Stakeholder Feedback
3. Process Monitoring of Impacts
4. Most Significant Change
5. Outcome Harvesting

USAID. (2013). *Complexity Aware Monitoring*. Discussion Note. Version 2.0. Washington DC.

USAID/ERA'S JOURNEY

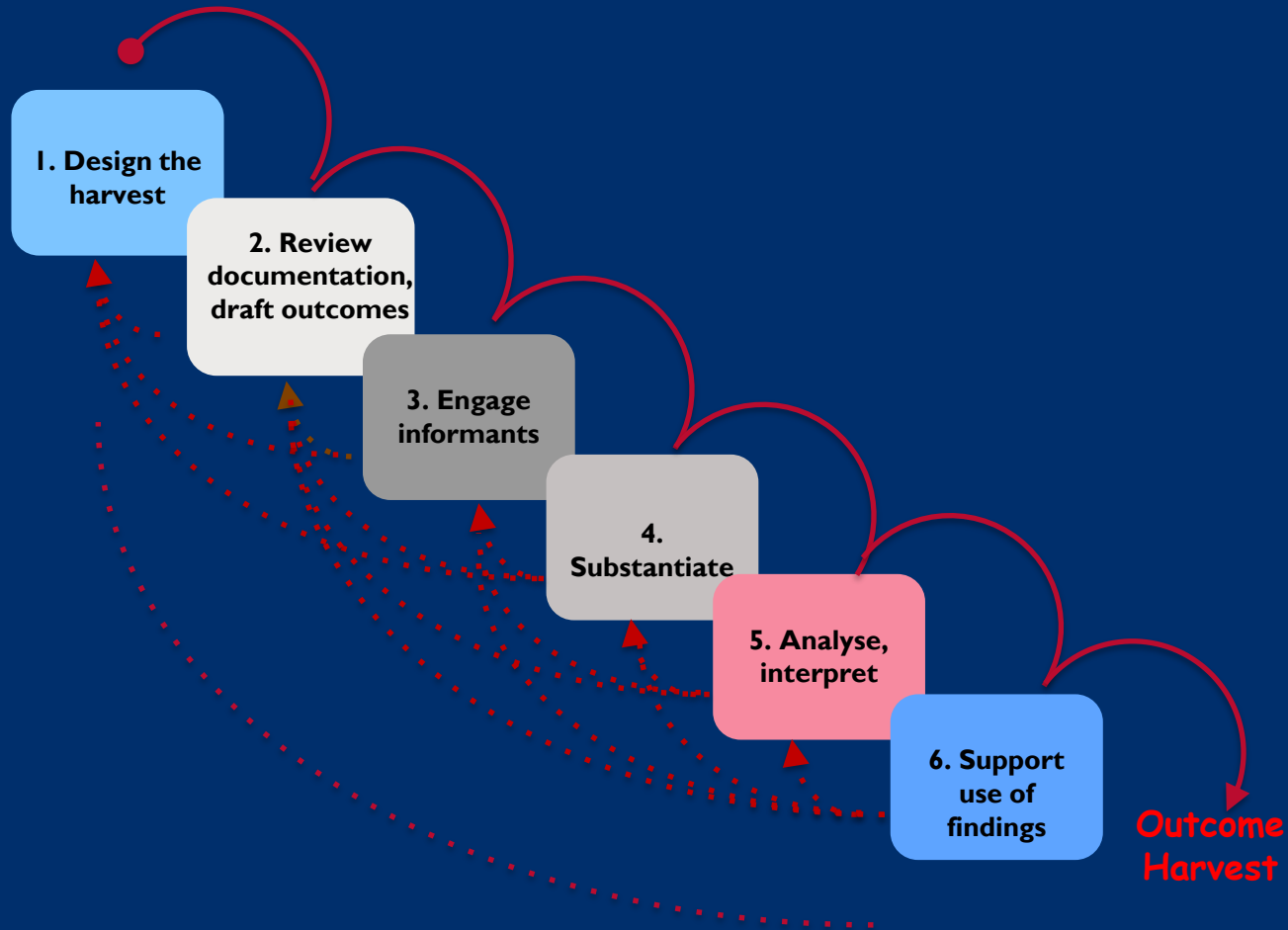
- **Context of complexity** (per Six Simple Questions Worksheet)
 - ***Cause and effect are poorly understood and difficult to ascertain.*** Change in human and institutional capacity is slow, distal, and mediated by numerous variables which may or may not be immediately apparent. Especially pertinent in this regard is the near impossibility of claiming attribution; with so many partners and projects intervening in similar areas of work, we believe credible and careful claims of contribution are more appropriate.
 - ***Adaptive management, including to take advantage of new opportunities.*** Since 2010, our project has adapted and revised its approach and focus numerous times, in part to address management shortcomings earlier in the project, and in part to reflect significant changes in the environment, such as the passage of a law in January 2014 requiring universities to engage in community service/outreach.
 - ***The purpose of the project is to influence social change.*** ERA seeks to effect social change at least within our institutional partners (and hopefully beyond in the agricultural training/research/outreach system more broadly), whereby universities, training centers, and related institutions are actively engaged in forging connections and leveraging knowledge to contribute to community and economic development in Senegal.

USAID/ERA'S JOURNEY



With support from the Mission and PPL, Virginia Tech commissioned an Outcome Harvesting evaluation, with a consultant to lead a participatory external/internal evaluation of the ERA project.

6 Outcome Harvesting Steps



INTENDED USERS AND INTENDED USES

- **Economic Growth Office at USAID/Senegal (represented by Souley Wade, Agreement Officer Representative):** To have summative evidence of the strengths and weaknesses of the design and implementation of the project, primarily to inform follow-on activities.
- **Virginia Tech's Office of International Research, Education, and Development (OIREd) (represented by Tom Archibald):** To inform improved design and implementation of future proposed projects, and to increase likelihood of securing funding for future projects.
- **ERA Partner Institutions (represented by the focal points):** To foster reflection and analysis on their own progress, results, and challenges over the years, and to help position them to continue ERA-related activities, either on their own or with future international partners.
- **ERA Project (represented by Demba Mbaye):** To improve project performance through enhanced learning and adaptive management, and to help 'share the ERA story' through knowledge translation and communication in the close-out year.
- **USAID Policy, Planning and Learning Bureau (PPL) and USAID/Senegal Program Office (represented by Elizabeth Callender):** Observe and learn about the process of Outcome Harvesting to see how it could complement current USAID monitoring and evaluation practices.



How use was encouraged throughout the evaluation

- The understanding of the method by the users and their active involvement in decision making around the evaluation processes, increases the chances that the evaluation will be used.
 - All users commented on the design
 - Outcomes were 'harvested' in a workshop to build the capacity of the participants. The mission participated in the workshop.
 - Part of the analysis is done together with the informants (ERA team and focal points).
- Internal/external evaluation enhances use.



HOW THE “ROAD TO BEST FIT” SUPPORTED THE EVALUATION

- Collaborative decision-making about approach, design, contracting, implementation of the evaluation with input from PPL, USAID/Senegal, USAID/ERA, and the consultant
- Good mutual understanding among stakeholders about the opportunity to test complexity-aware evaluation
- On track to yield learning and use for ERA and Mission, plus capacity for ERA and its partners

— Thank you!

