A Conceptual Evaluation Framework for Narrowing the Gap between Science and Practice

Tiffany Berry
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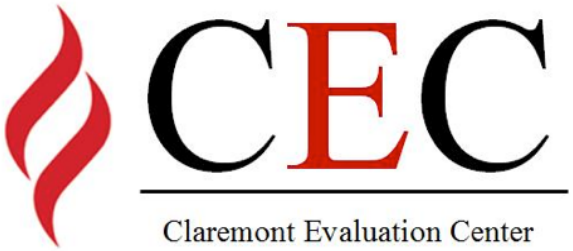


American Evaluation Association, Denver, CO

Research University

Full-time Evaluator

Development

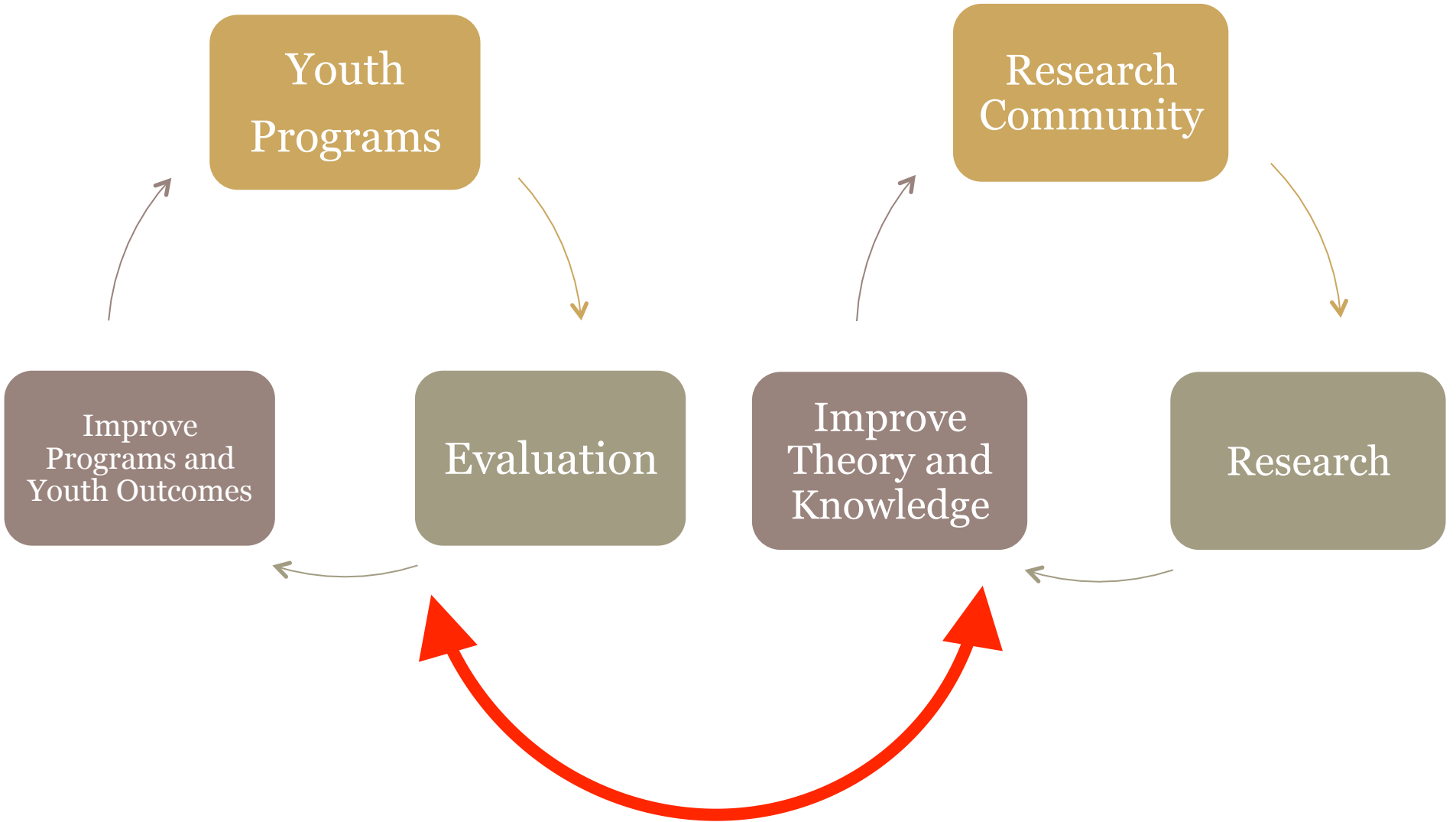
Evaluation

Context of Work

Disciplinary Training

Evaluation Process

Research Process

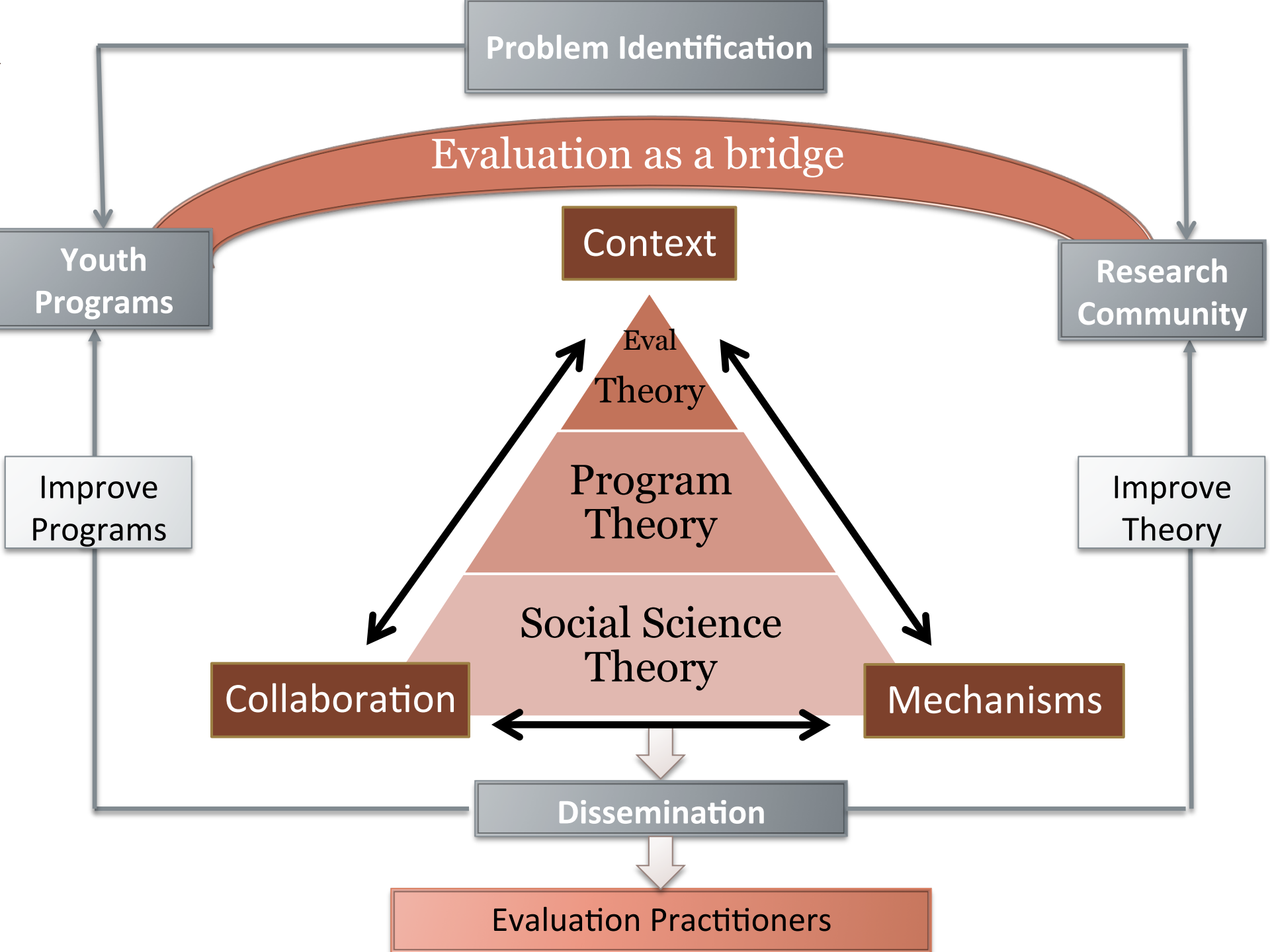


How can we reframe evaluation inquiry so that we can **strategically** and **intentionally** narrow the gap between science and practice?

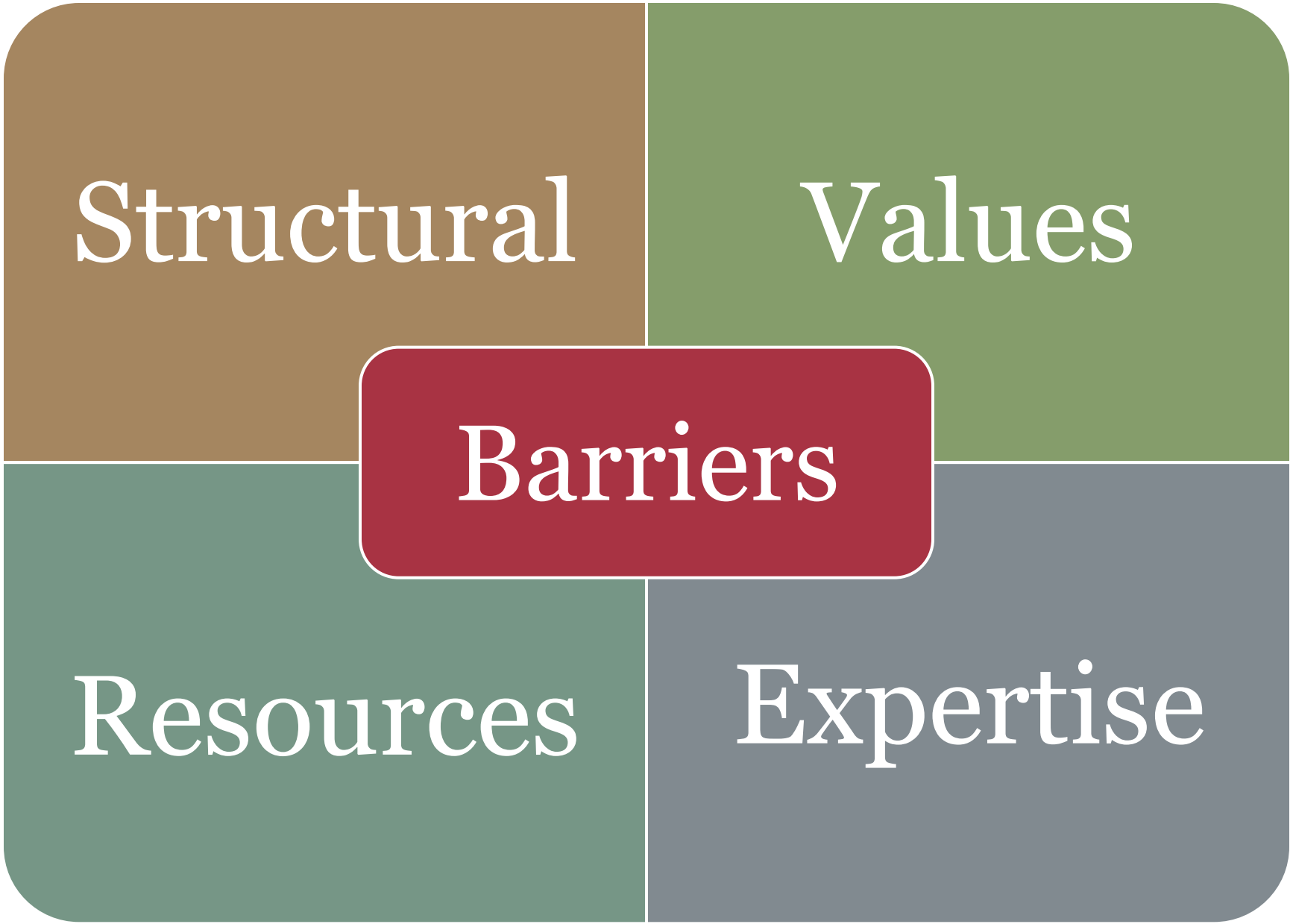
Evaluation as a bridge

The Need for a Conceptual Model

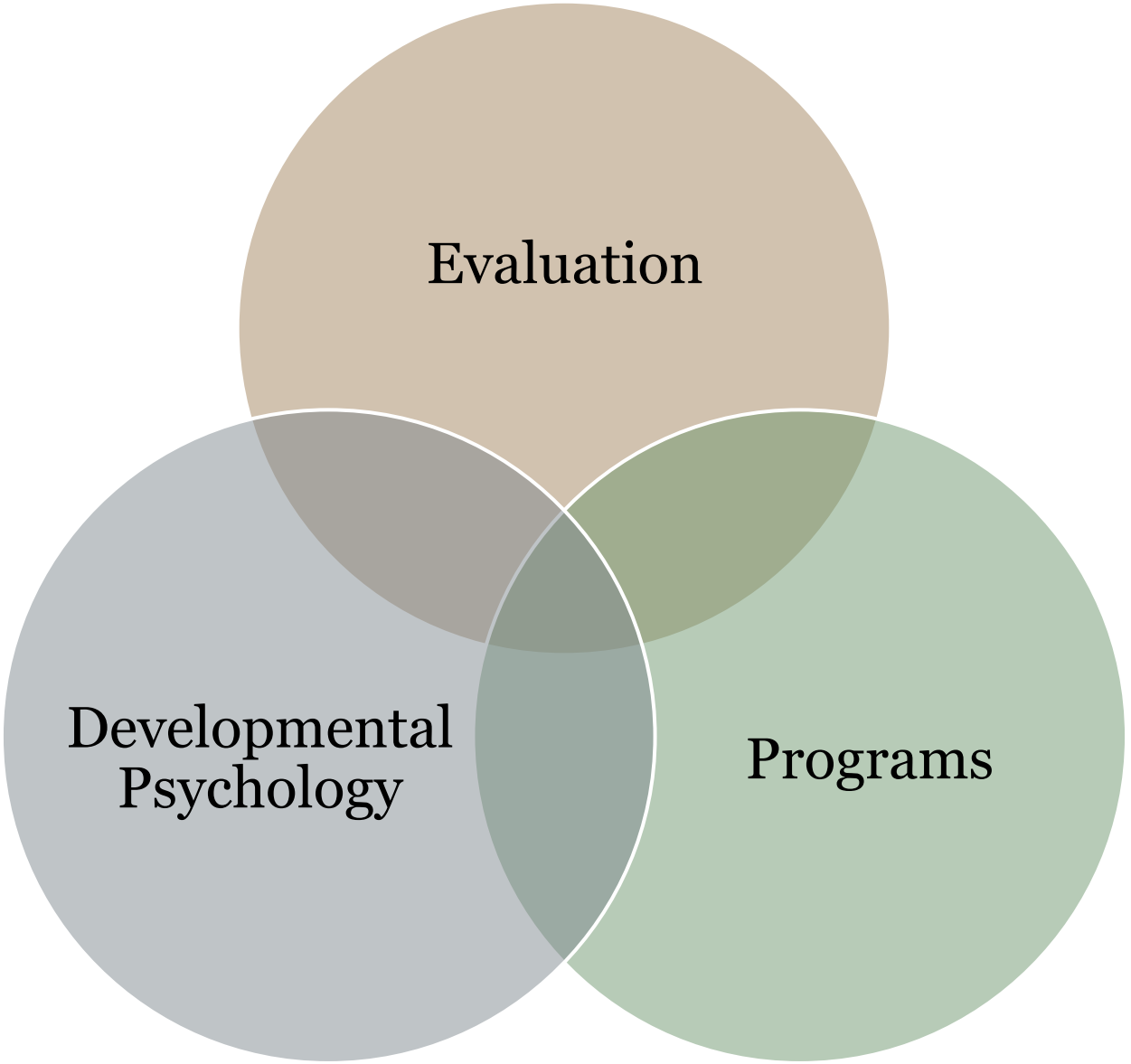
- Applied developmental science
  - Lerner, Jacobs, & Wertlieb
- Theory-driven evaluation
  - Chen, Donaldson
  - Realist evaluation (Pawson & Tilley)
    - "What works for whom in what circumstances and in what respects, and how?")
- Knowledge development
  - Mark, Henry, & Julnes


Problem Identification
Evaluation as a bridge
Youth Programs
Context
Research Community
Eval Theory
Program Theory
Social Science Theory
Improve Programs
Improve Theory
Collaboration
Mechanisms
Dissemination
Evaluation Practitioners

- Methodological innovations
- Understanding context & person/context interactions
- Knowledge of at-risk, vulnerable populations
- Identification of new variables that seem to matter, predictors; developmental trajectories


Structural
Values
Barriers
Resources
Expertise

Implications for Evaluation Training



Improving the quality of evaluation practice

Improving evaluation influence

Improve evaluation sustainability

Improve the "value" of evaluation

Unpacking the Model in Practice

Aligning evaluation around common core educational policy

Understanding predictors of consistent participation afterschool

Examining the overall effectiveness of a college readiness program

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Strategies for Supporting Program Sustainability During Political Change

Katherine V. Harder

Claremont Graduate University

Agenda

- Policy change and evaluation practice
- Common Core and Afterschool programs
- Our evaluation
- Lessons learned and implications

Evaluation as a bridge

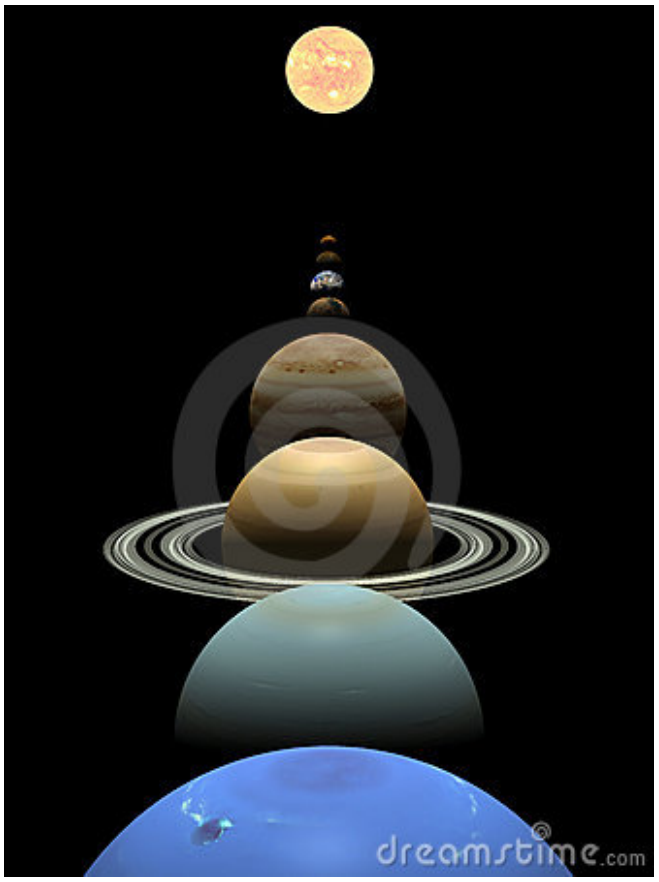
Policy and Evaluation Practice

- Evaluation practice is embedded in a political context
- Evaluators can be proactive partners with program stakeholders
- Support program sustainability during political change

Common Core

- Common Core provides new learning goals and assessments for K-12 instruction.
- Adopted by 46 US states and currently being implemented in schools.
- Developed to meet new demands of 21st Century workforce and as education reform to improve high school graduation rate.

Assessing alignment between Common Core and afterschool



- Increase knowledge of Common Core
- Communicate and organize trainings with school staff
- Align afterschool activities with habits of mind

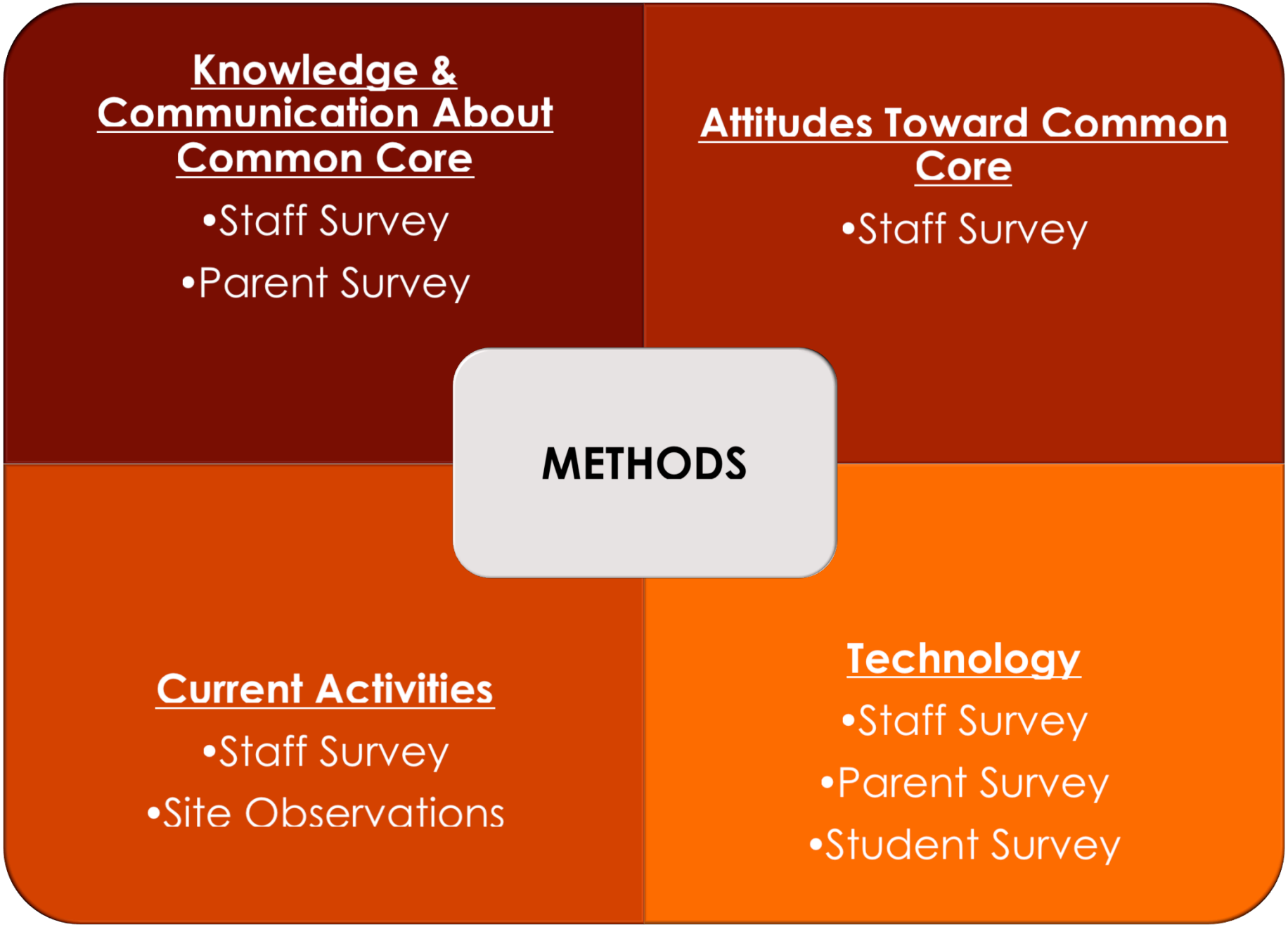
(Devaney & Yohalem, July 2012)

Our evaluation

- School district in greater Los Angeles area

- Afterschool program
  - Serves approximately 7,000 students
  - Sites: 16 elementary, 6 intermediate, 1 K-8
  - Program providers: 7 Community Based Organizations

Framing the question


Knowledge & Communication About Common Core
•Staff Survey
•Parent Survey
Attitudes Toward Common Core
•Staff Survey
METHODS
Current Activities
•Staff Survey
•Site Observations
Technology
•Staff Survey
•Parent Survey
•Student Survey

Evaluation Findings

Knowledge

46% of parents reported receiving information about Common Core

Staff are unfamiliar with most of the Common Core learning goals

Attitudes

Many staff were unsure of the role of afterschool in the Common Core

30% of staff felt that their program would *not* change

Evaluation Findings

Activities

Staff reported that the activities offered are aligned with Common Core

Site observations showed a different story

Technology

42% of staff reported no access to computers

84% of parents report that their child has access to a computer

What did we learn?

- Open-ended questions on staff survey provided rich data on staff knowledge and attitudes
- The evaluation revealed areas for improvement in staff-parent communication
- Access to technology in programs
- Future directions for this year's evaluation

Back to the bridge

Evaluators

Research Community

Youth-Serving Programs

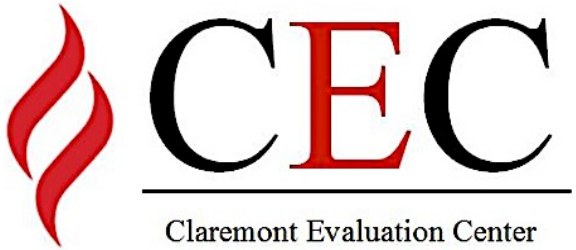
Thank you!!

Katherine V. Harder (katherine.harder@cgu.edu)

Claremont Graduate University

Claremont Evaluation Center, Claremont, CA

Applying Developmental Principles in Evaluation Practice: Examining Predictors of Program Attendance



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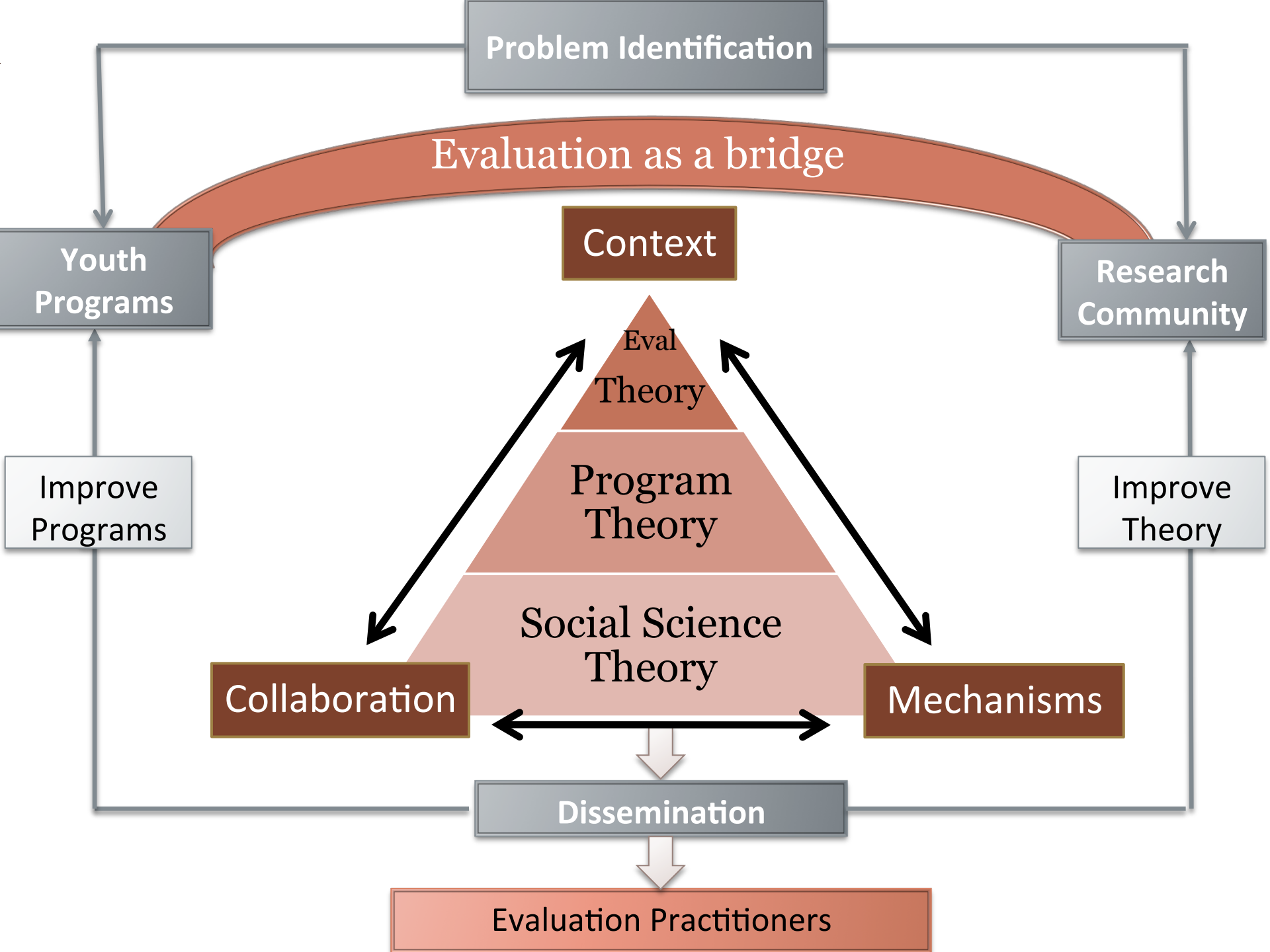
What factors predict program attendance?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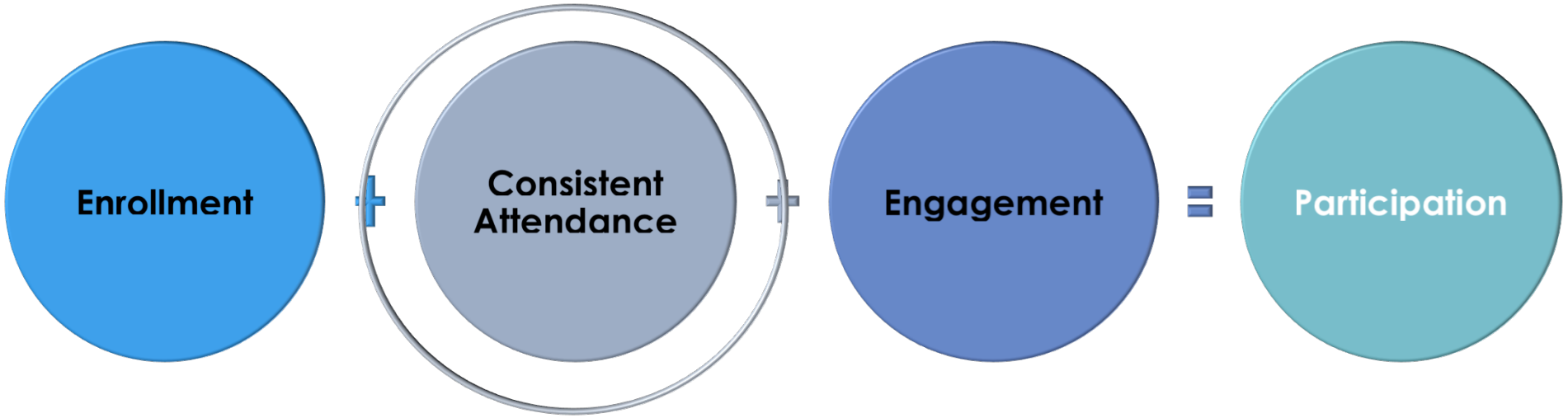
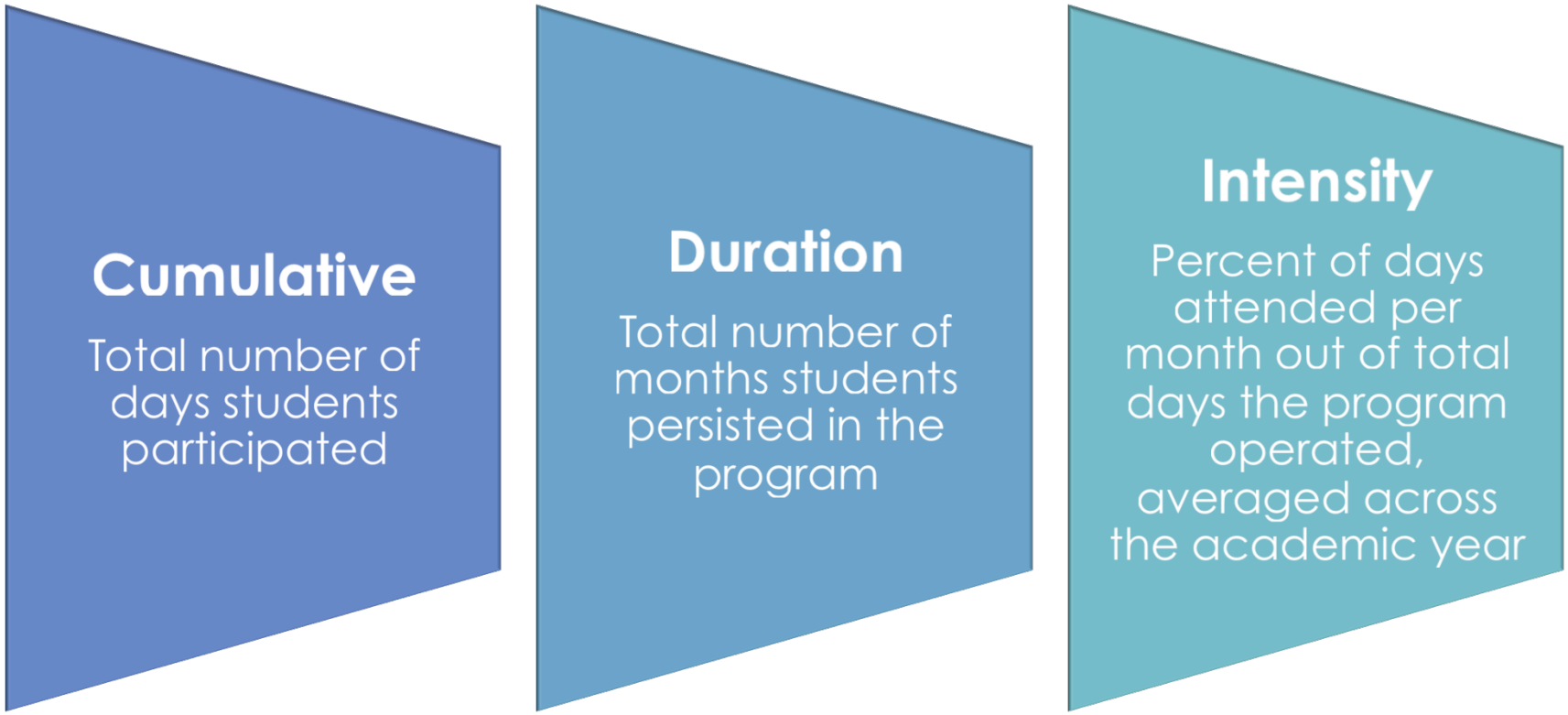
Measuring Program Attendance

- Moved away from a Yes-No dichotomy
- Participation Equation



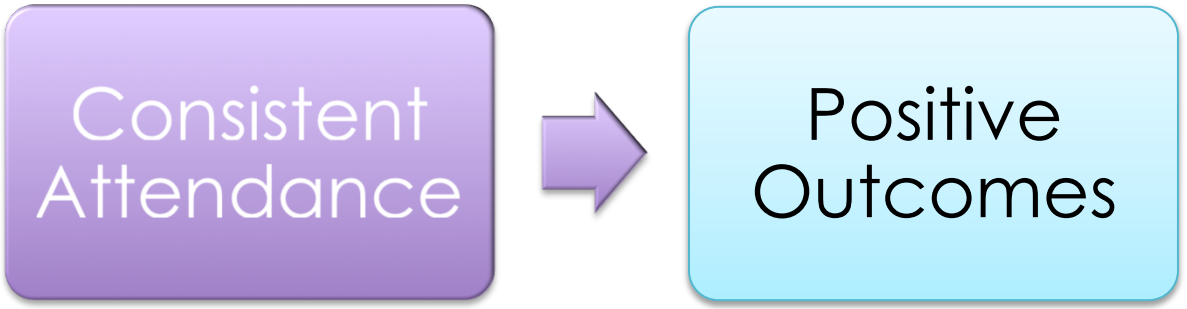
Weiss, Little, Bouffard, 2005

Measuring Consistent Attendance



Examining Mechanisms Associated with Positive Youth Outcomes

A Closer Look at the Mechanisms of Change



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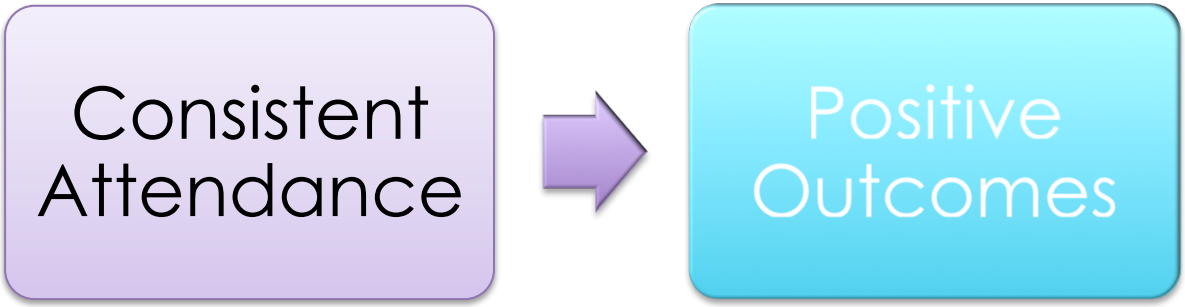
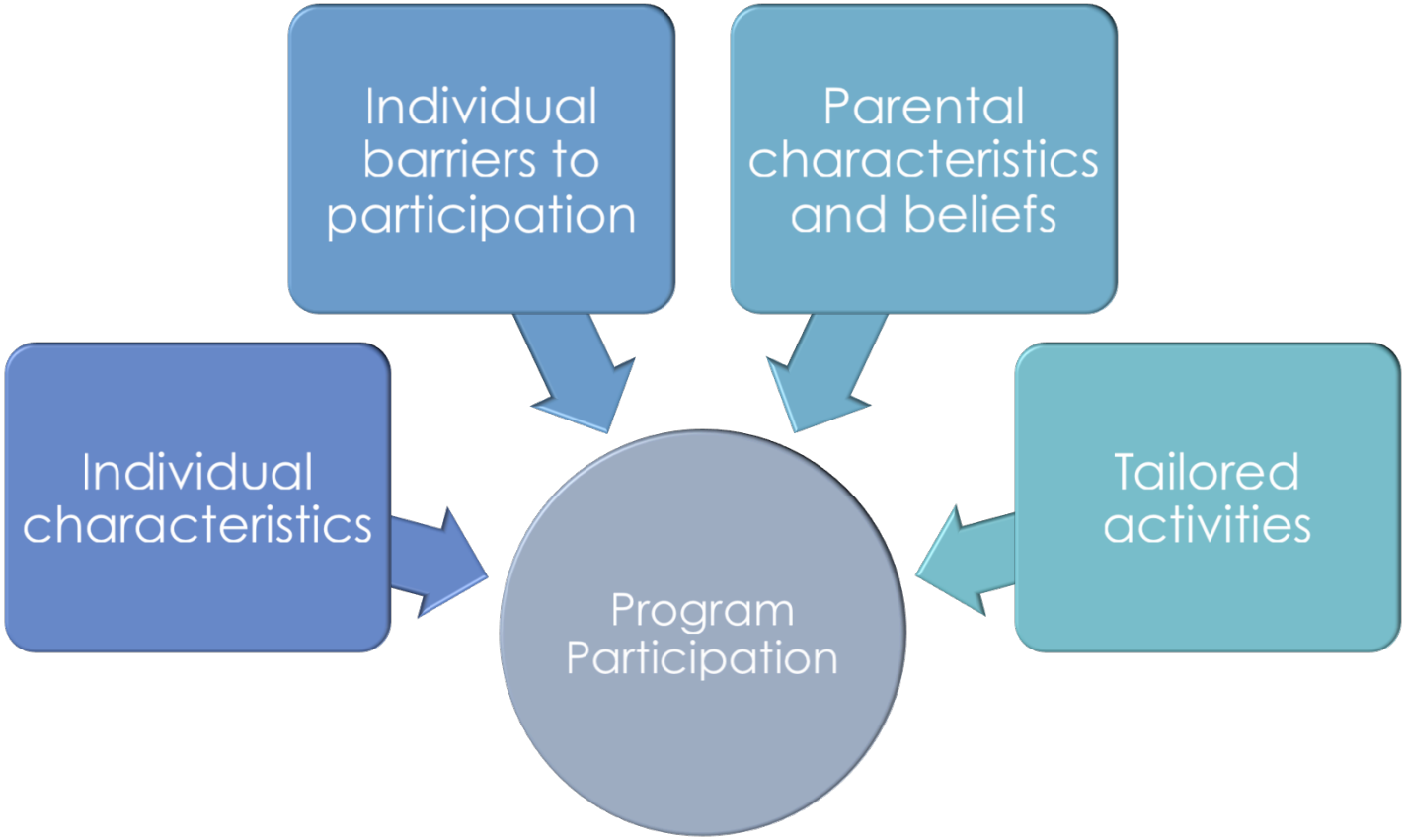


A Closer Look at the Mechanisms of Change

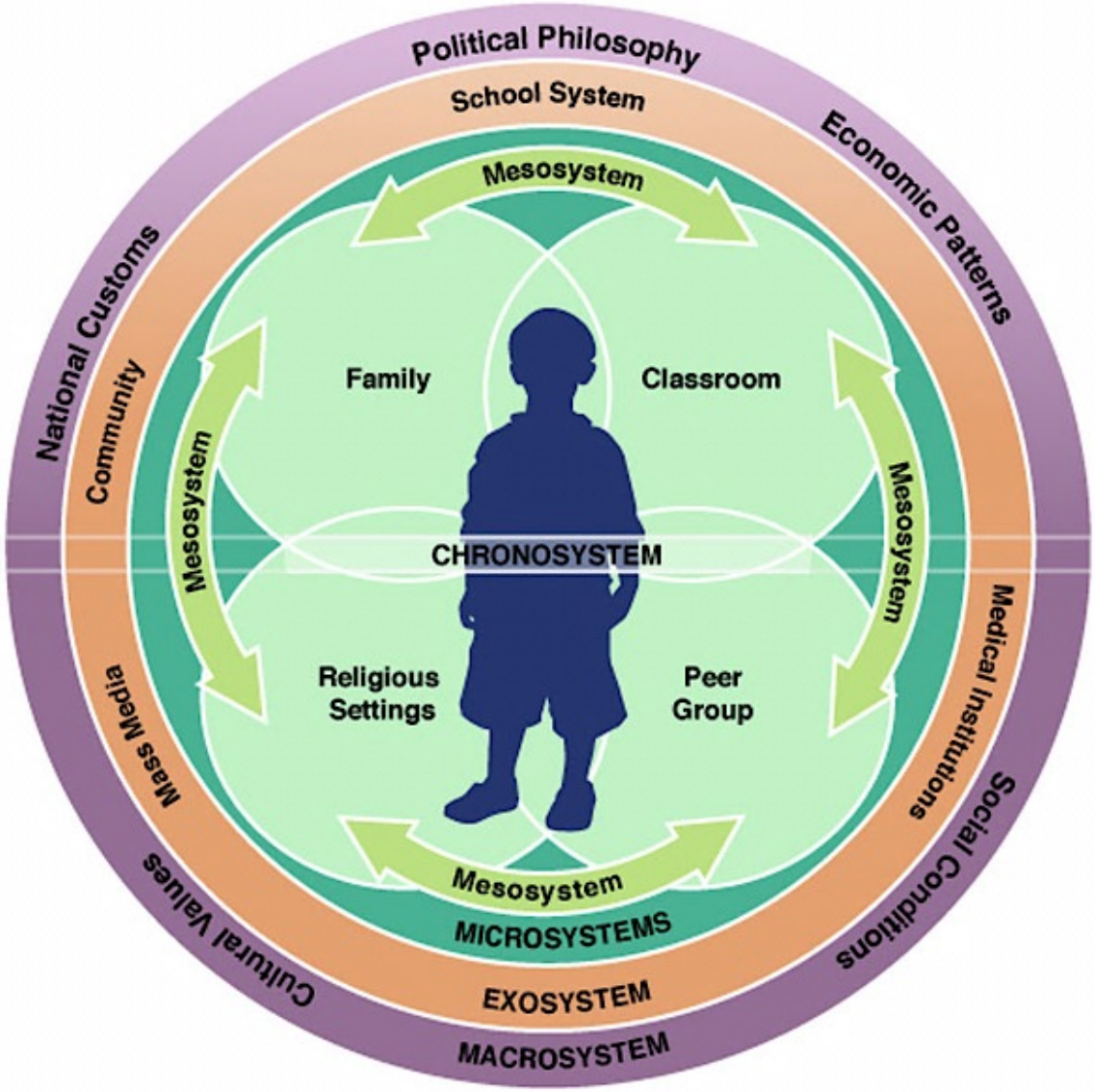
What factors predict program participation?



Denault & Poulin, 2009; Lauver, Little, & Weiss, 2004; Little, Wimer, & Weiss, 2008

Unpacking the Context via Social Science Theory

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Model of Child Development



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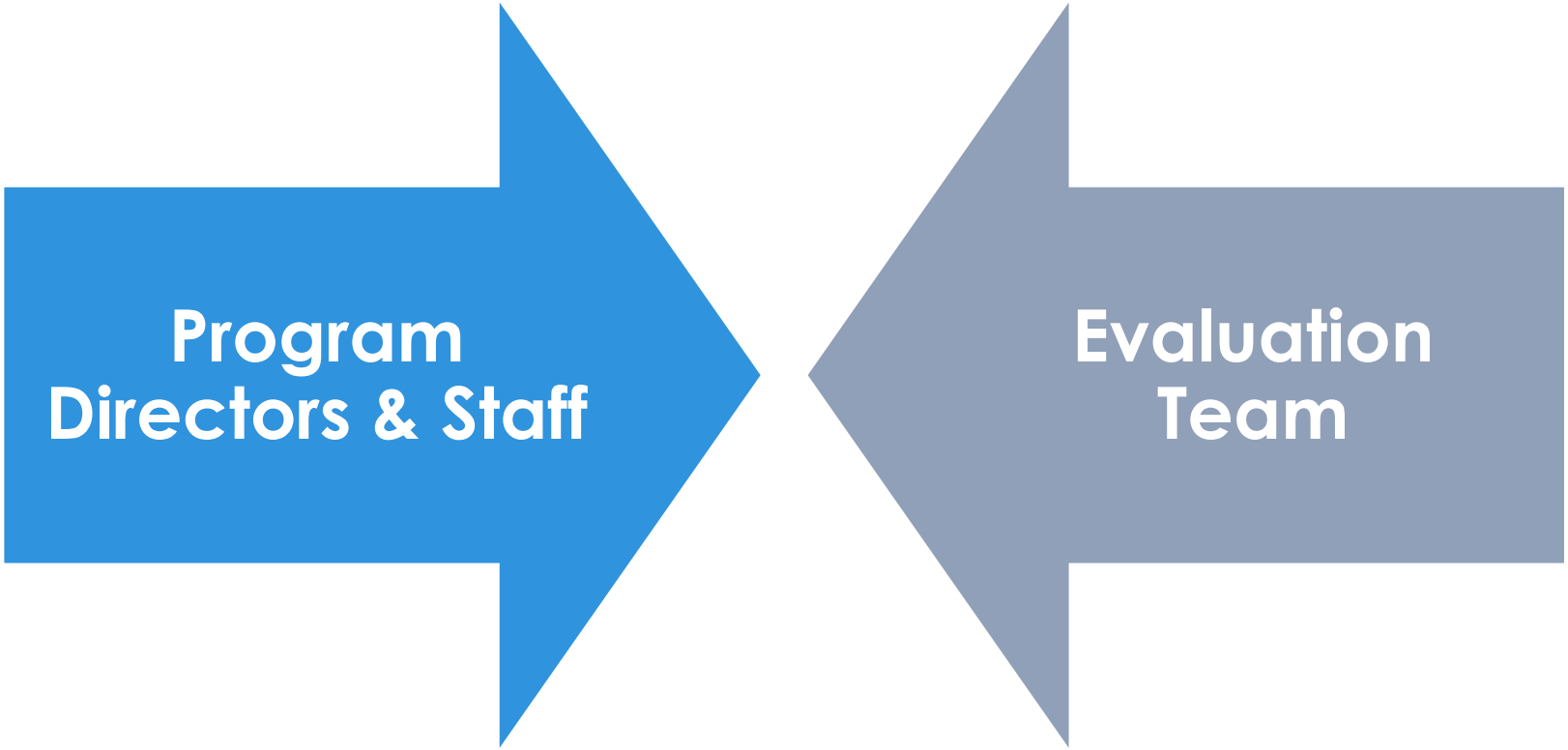
Understanding Program Theory Through Collaboration



Demographic & Structural

Grade	• 6th, 7th or 8th
Reason for Joining	• Self, parent, friend, or teacher/ principal
Transportation	• Parent, other adult, or self

Program Context

Program Satisfaction	• I enjoy coming to the program. • The things I learn at the program are important to me.
Relationship with Peers	• I have a lot of friends in the program. • I can trust the other kids in the program.
Restricted Involvement	• I only attend the program when my favorite sport is in season. • I only attend the program to get academic support (e.g., test prep, homework help)

School Context

School Climate

- During the school day, I feel safe at this school.
- I am proud of my school.

Perceived Teacher Support

- Teachers at my school expect me to go to college.
- Teachers at my school give me extra help when I need it.

School-Program Interaction

School Involvement in Program Events

- My teachers attend program events.
- My principal attends program events.

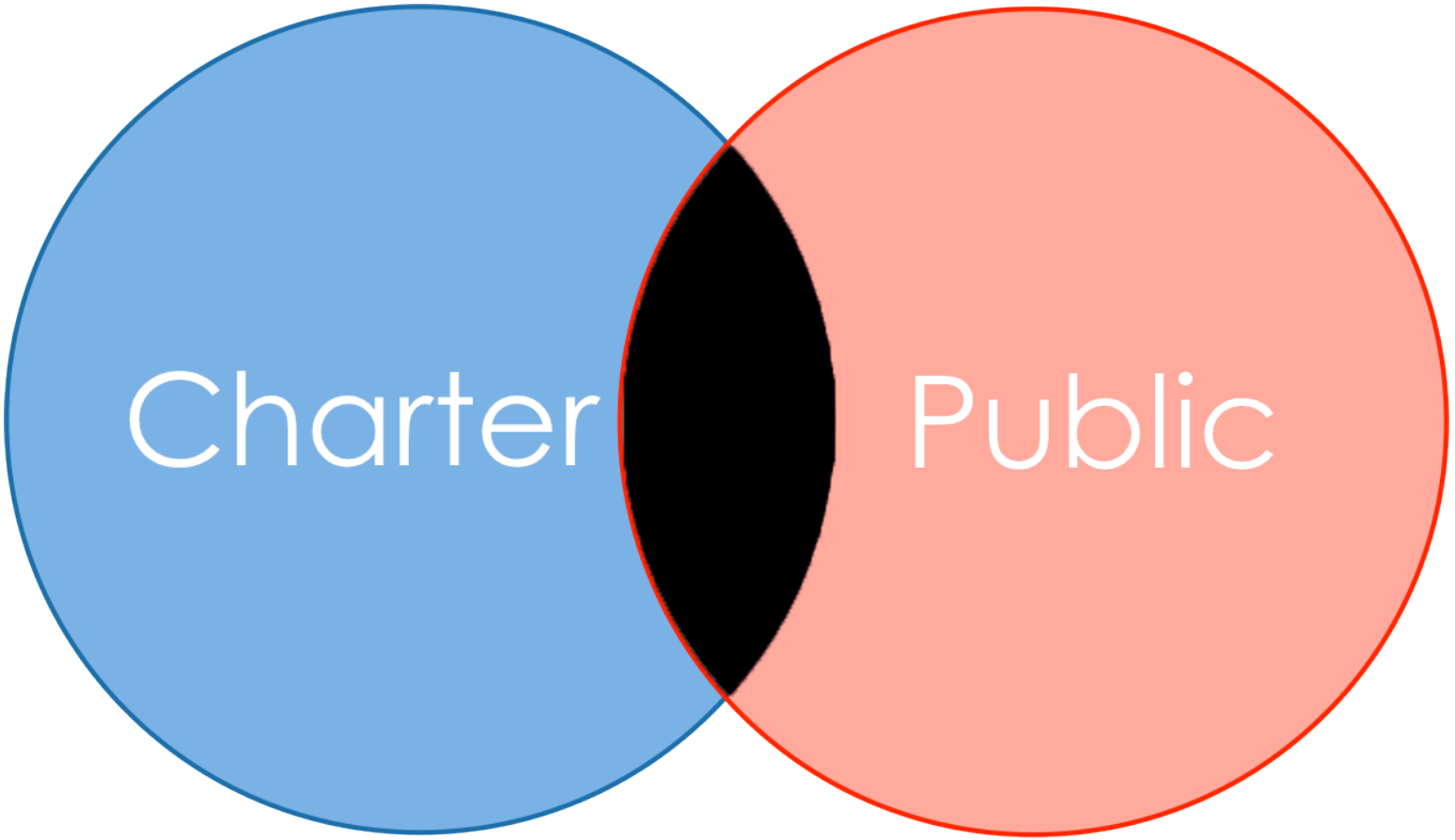
School Support for the Program

- My school values the program.
- My school encourages me to attend the program.

Academic Synergy

- My program leader know what I'm learning during regular school time.
- The program helps me better understand what I learn during regular school time.

Disaggregating Data



Demographic & Structural Findings

	Cumulative	Duration	Intensity
Grade			
Reason for Joining			
Transportation			

Demographic & Structural Findings

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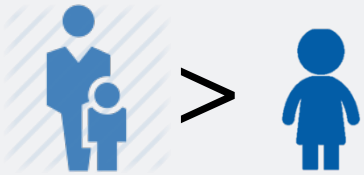
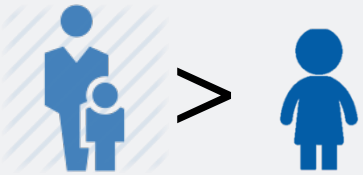
Grade			
Reason for Joining			
Transportation			

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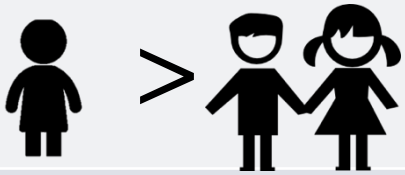
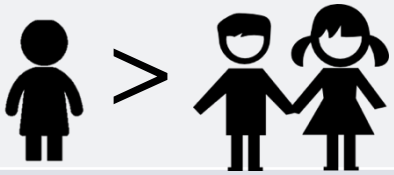
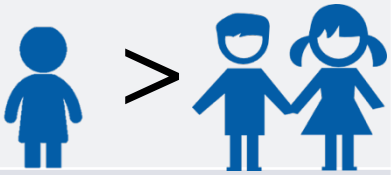
Reason for Joining			
Transportation			

Demographic & Structural Findings

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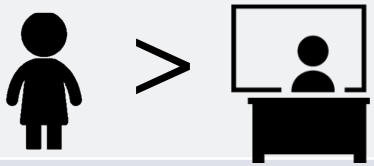
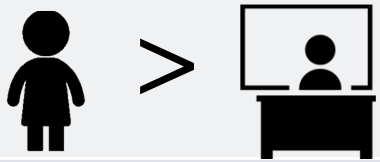
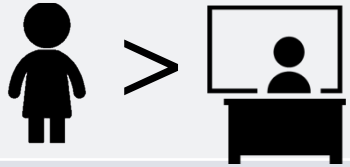
Grade			
Reason for Joining			
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Demographic & Structural Findings

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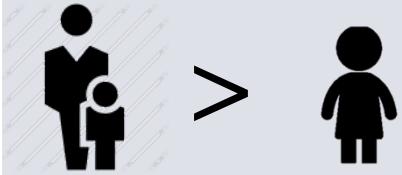
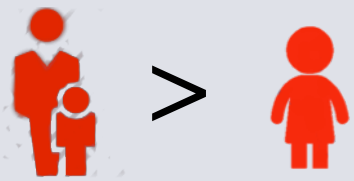
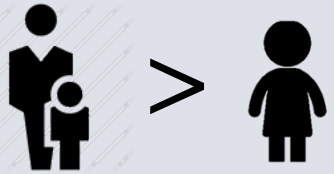
Transportation			

Program-Related Findings

	Cumulative	Duration	Intensity
Program Satisfaction			
Relationship with Peers			
Restricted Involvement			

School-Related Findings

	Cumulative	Duration	Intensity
School Climate			
Perceived Teacher Support			

School-Program Interaction Findings

	Cumulative	Duration	Intensity
School Involvement in Program Events	--	--	--
School Support for the Program	↓		
Academic Synergy	↑	↑	↑

Summary of Findings

- Context matters: more significant predictors for charter school sites
- Structural & demographic factors are highly predictive of attendance
- Program-level factors less predictive than expected
- School-level factors and the communication between program staff and teachers may matter more in some contexts

Implications

Evaluation Practice

- Examining mechanisms of change using social science frameworks
- Collaborating with stakeholders
- Disaggregating data

Implications

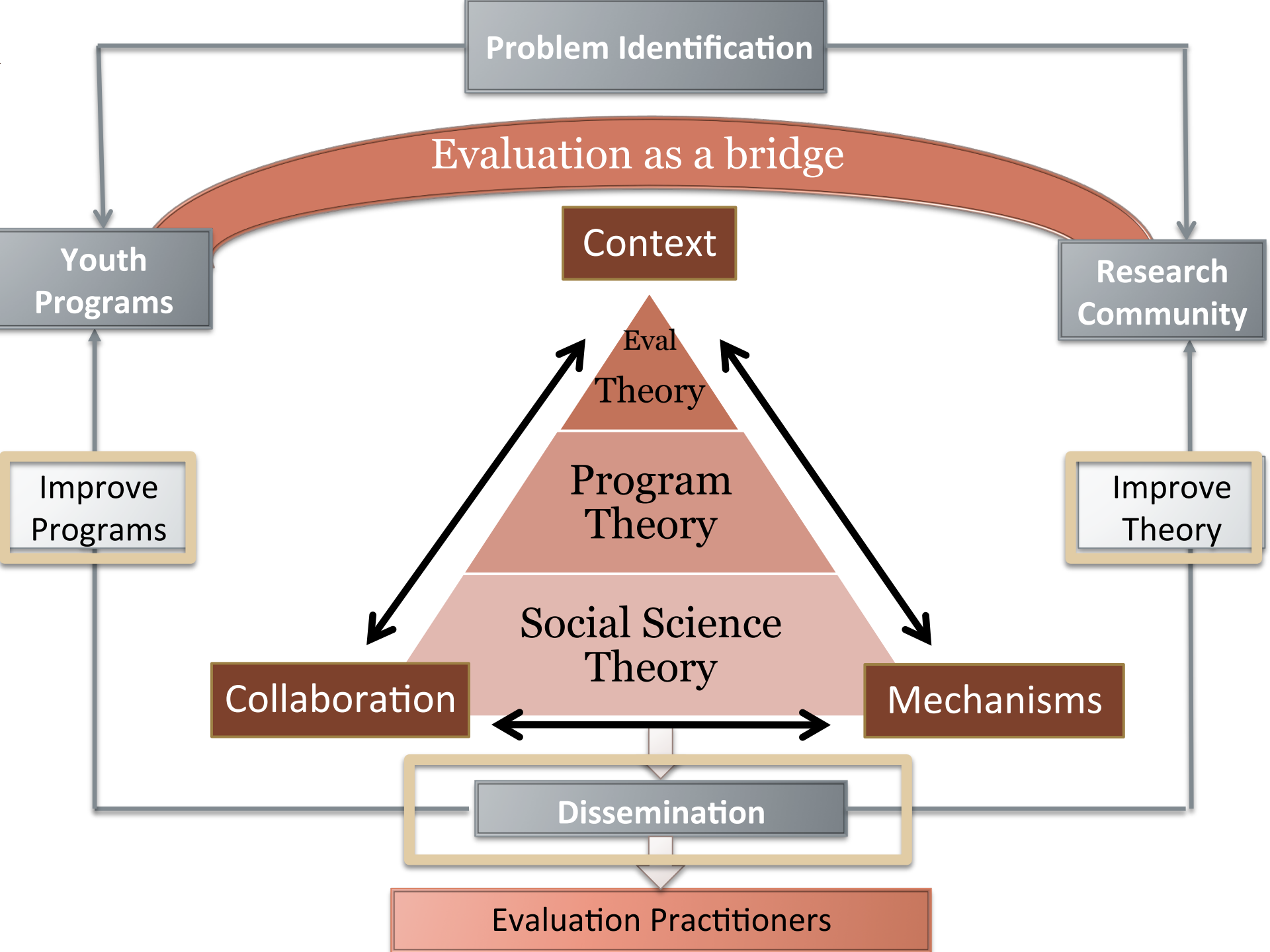
Program Practices

- Keeping students who have been "hooked" by specific activities
- Identifying ways to promote consistent attendance across grades
- Creating better communication streams between program staff and teachers

Implications

Social Science

- Findings add to existing theory regarding program attendance
- Identifies several areas for future research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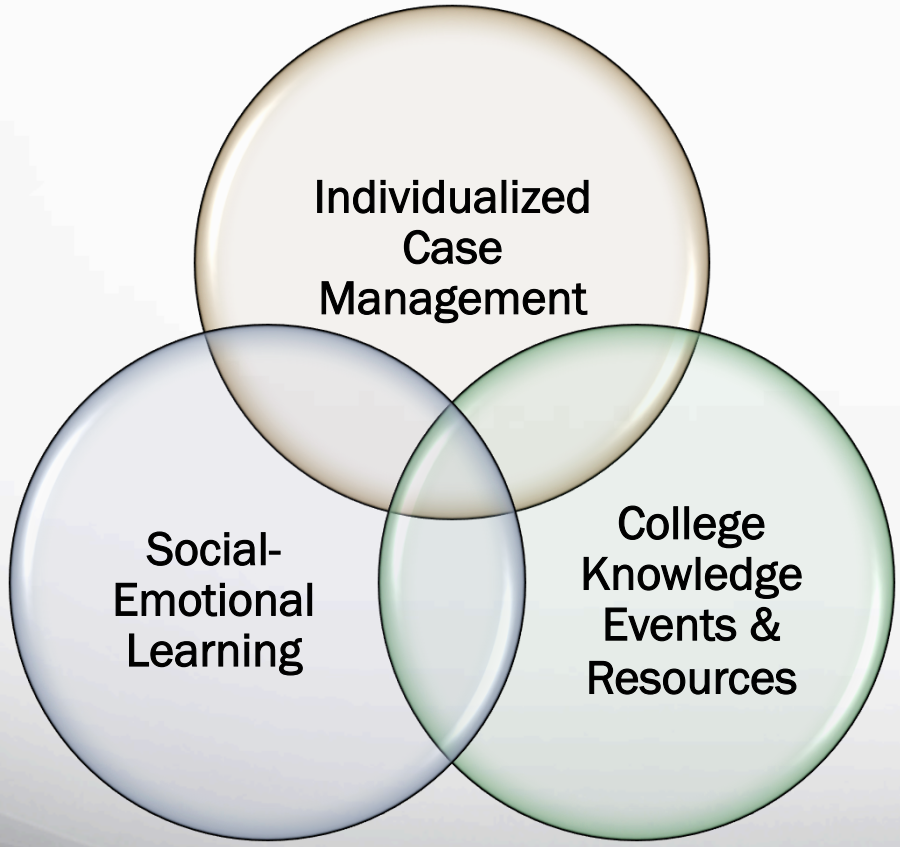
The Role of Evaluation in Investigating Youth Development Processes in Context:

Experiences in a College Readiness Program Evaluation

Michelle Sloper, M.A.
Claremont Evaluation Center
Claremont Graduate University

Evaluation Community
Practice: Youth Serving Programs
Research: Academic Community
HowardDigital.com

Evaluation Context: College Readiness Program



- Multi-site program located in Los Angeles County
  - MS & HS, primarily Hispanic/Latino students
- 4th year of external evaluation
- Unique program service model

Evaluation Opportunities

- Establish Relationships
- Position the Evaluation
- Develop a Theory of Change
- Examine Implementation
- Explore Empirical Links
- Disseminate Widely

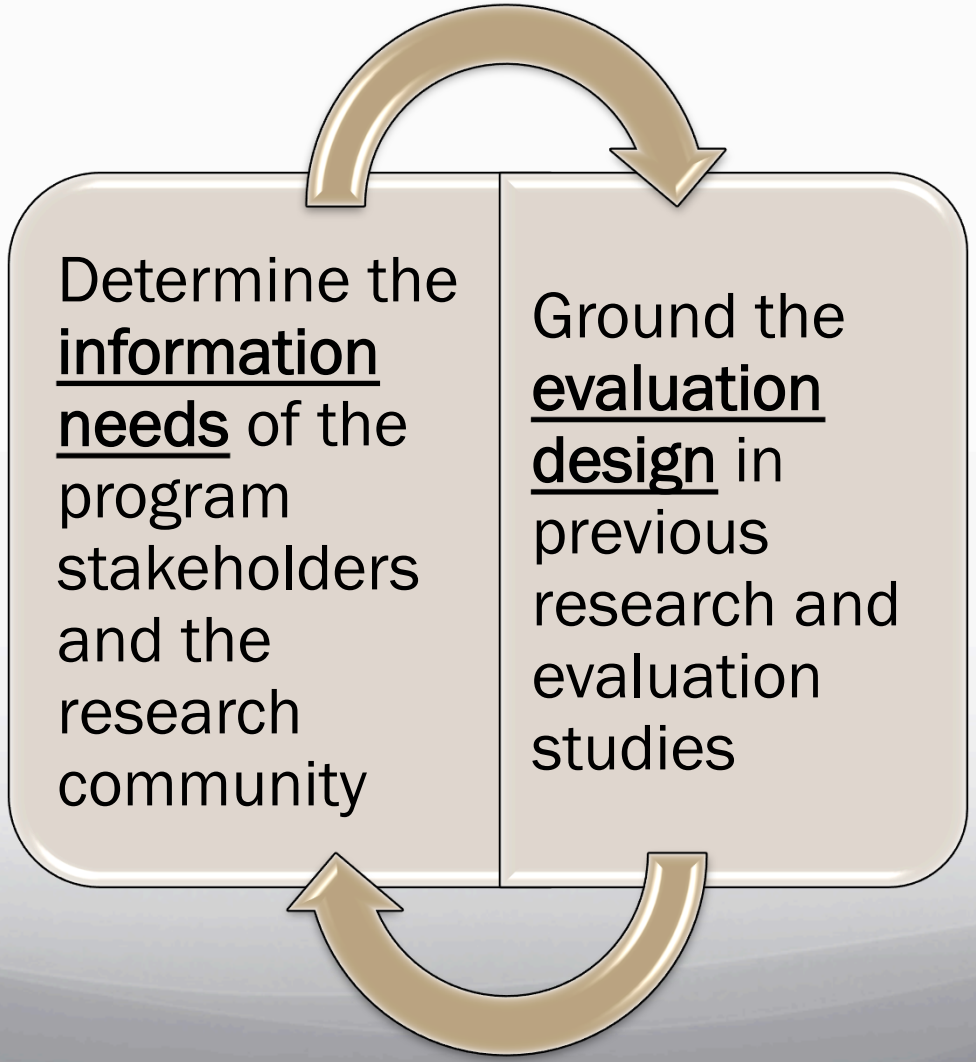
Establish Relationships

Program staff & leadership

Content experts

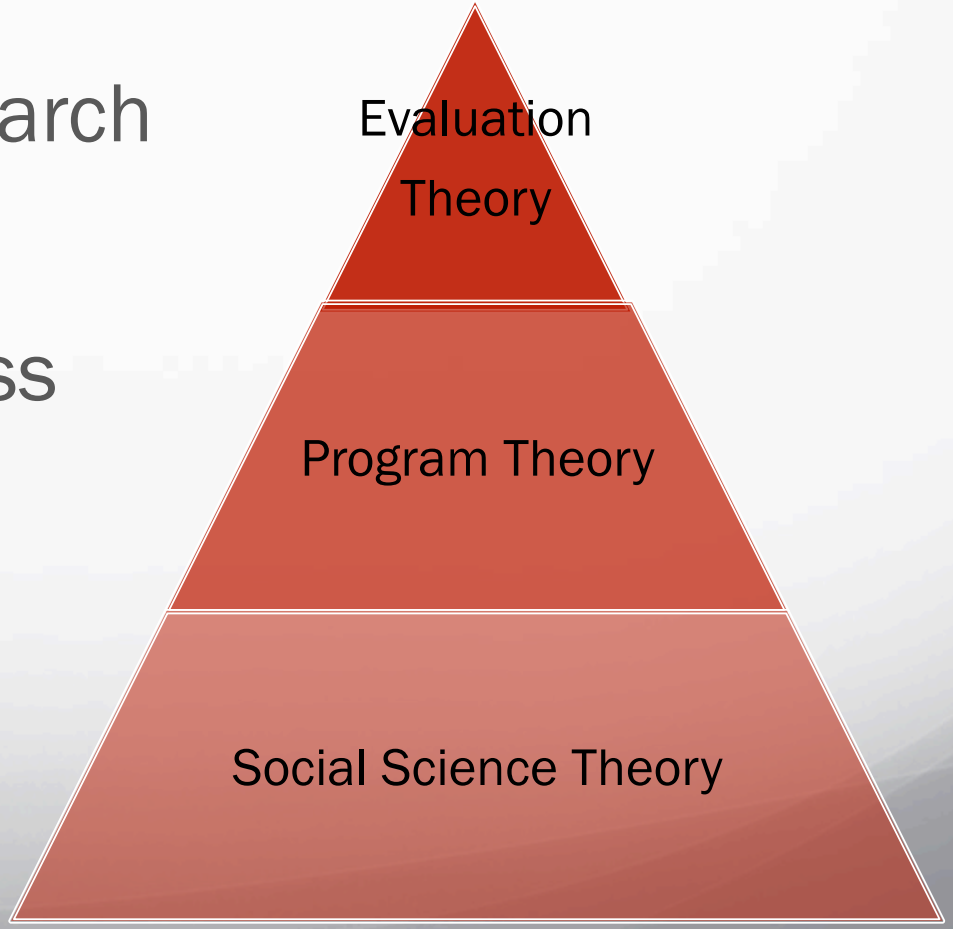
Research community

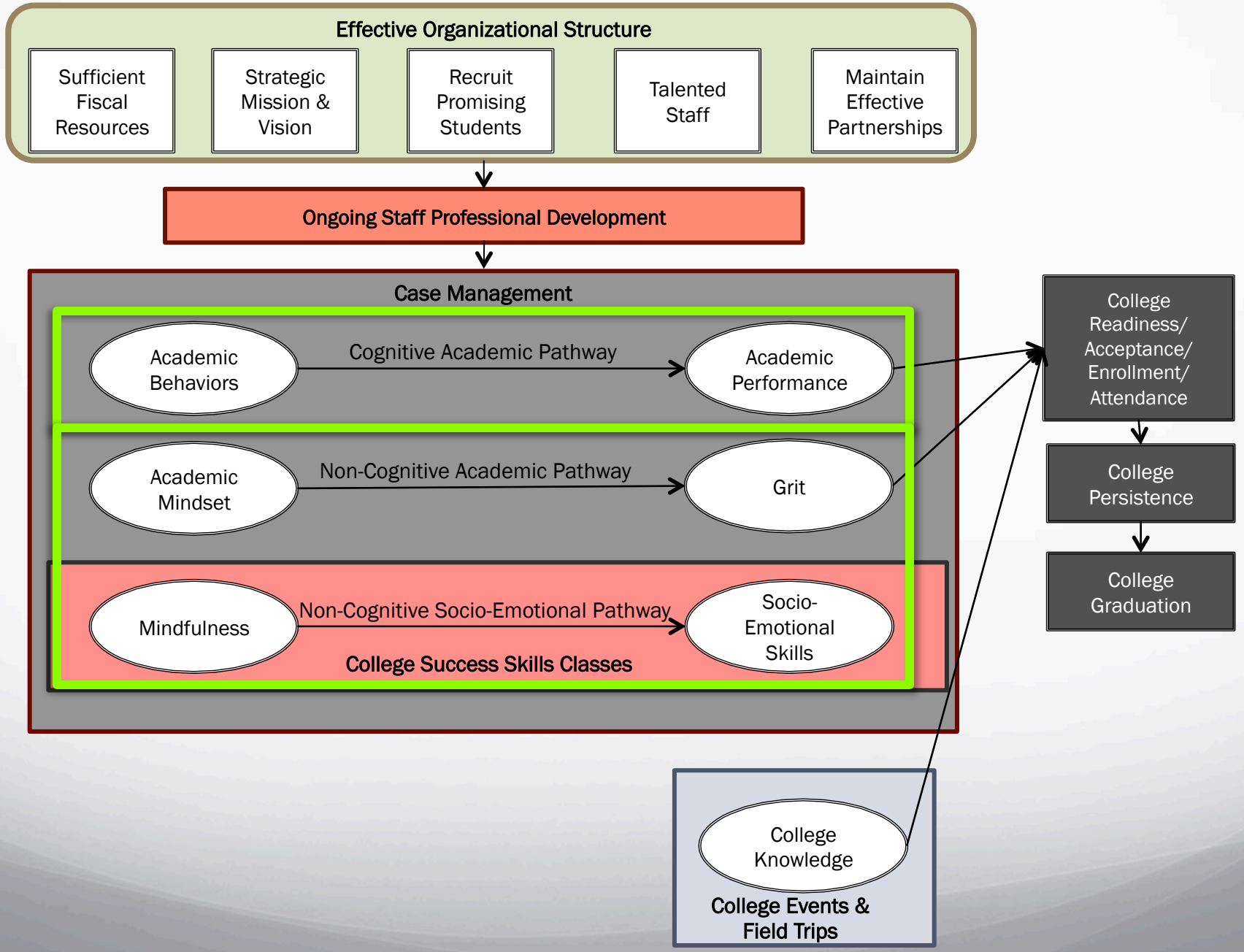
Position the Evaluation for Success



Develop a Theory of Change/ Study Model

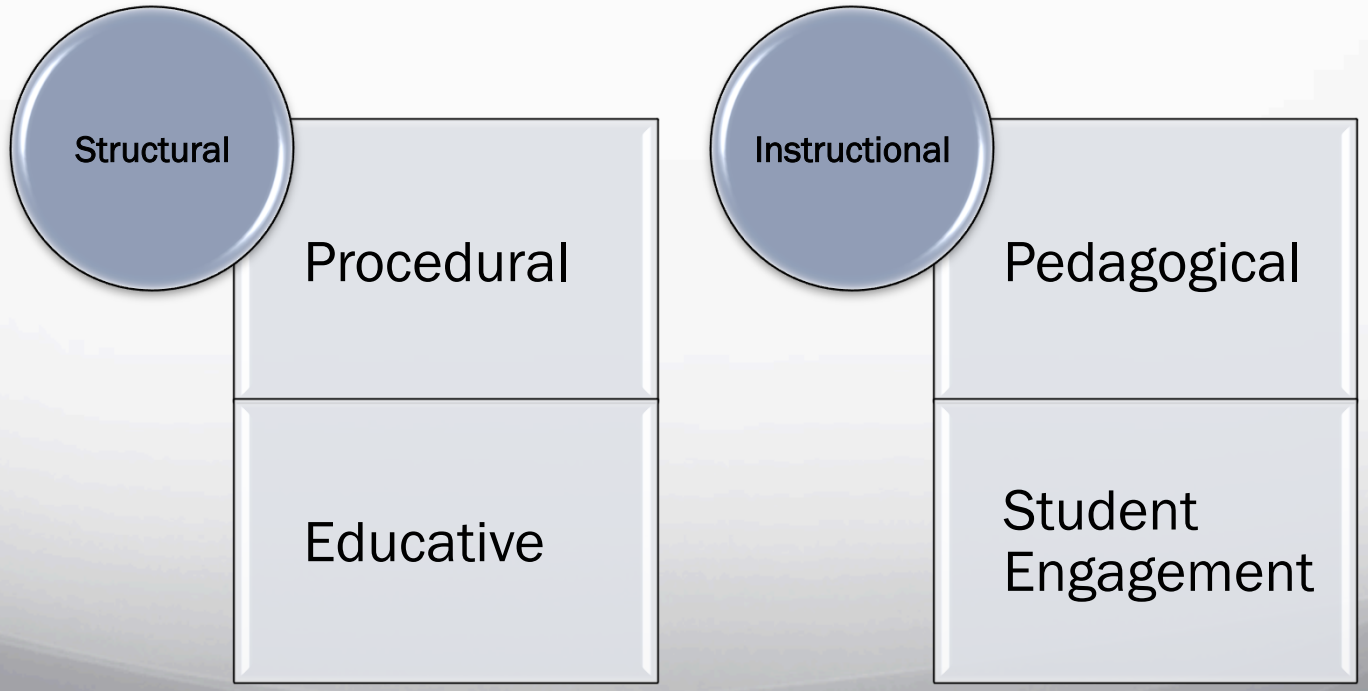
- Foundation for evaluation and research study
- Collaborative process with diverse stakeholders



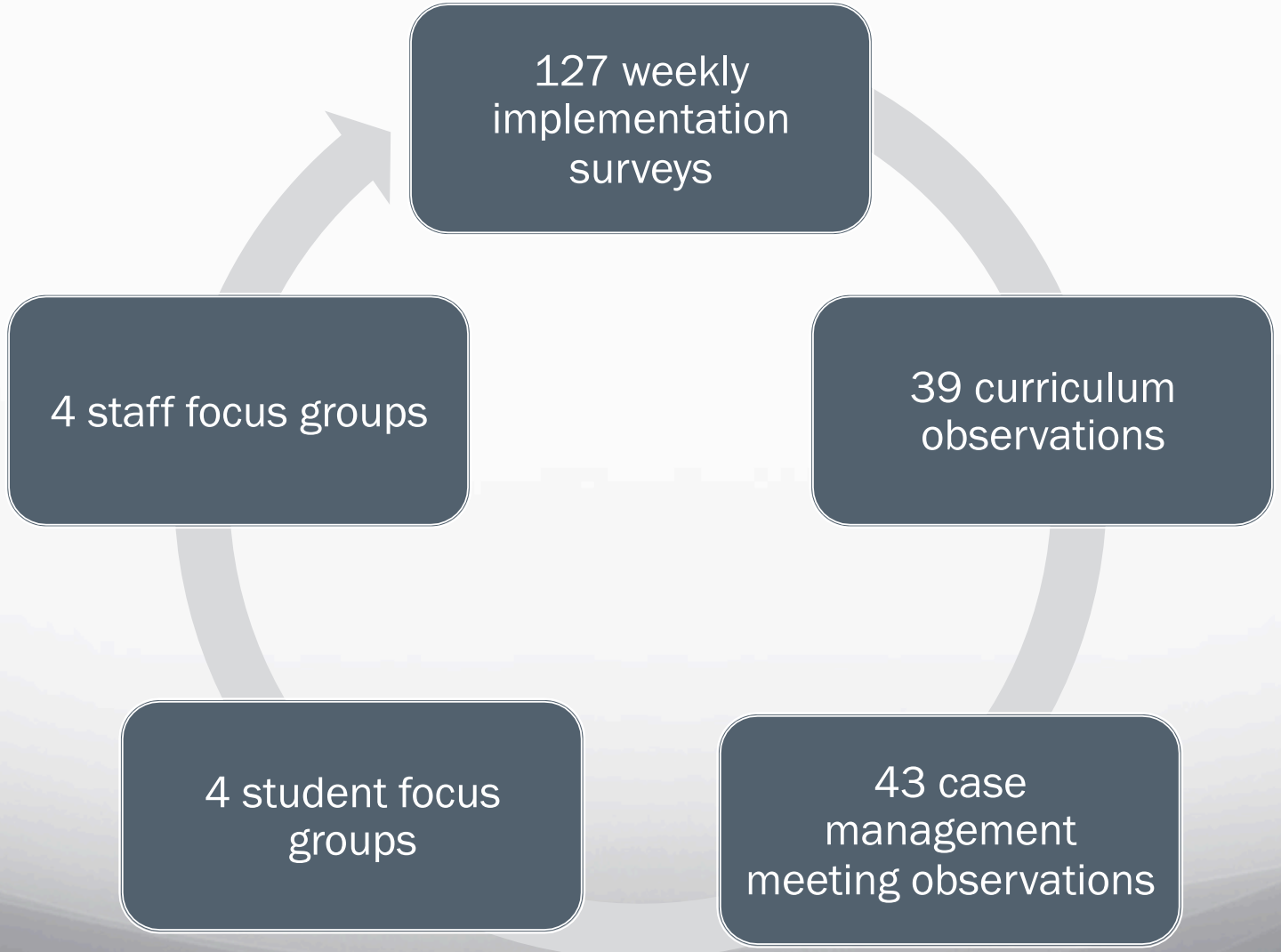

Effective Organizational Structure
Sufficient Fiscal Resources
Strategic Mission & Vision
Recruit Promising Students
Talented Staff
Maintain Effective Partnerships
Ongoing Staff Professional Development
Case Management
Academic Behaviors
Cognitive Academic Pathway
Academic Performance
Academic Mindset
Non-Cognitive Academic Pathway
Grit
Mindfulness
Non-Cognitive Socio-Emotional Pathway
Socio-Emotional Skills
College Success Skills Classes
College Readiness/ Acceptance/ Enrollment/ Attendance
College Persistence
College Graduation
College Knowledge
College Events & Field Trips

Examine Fidelity of Implementation

- Strong focus on curriculum implementation
- Century, Rudnick, & Freeman (2010) FOI framework



Implementation Measures



Explore Empirical Links

- Our first year of examining this conceptual model resulted in a number of important implementation findings.

Quasi-experimental evaluation study (2014-2015):

Social-emotional predictors of college readiness

Role of program in promoting social-emotional competencies

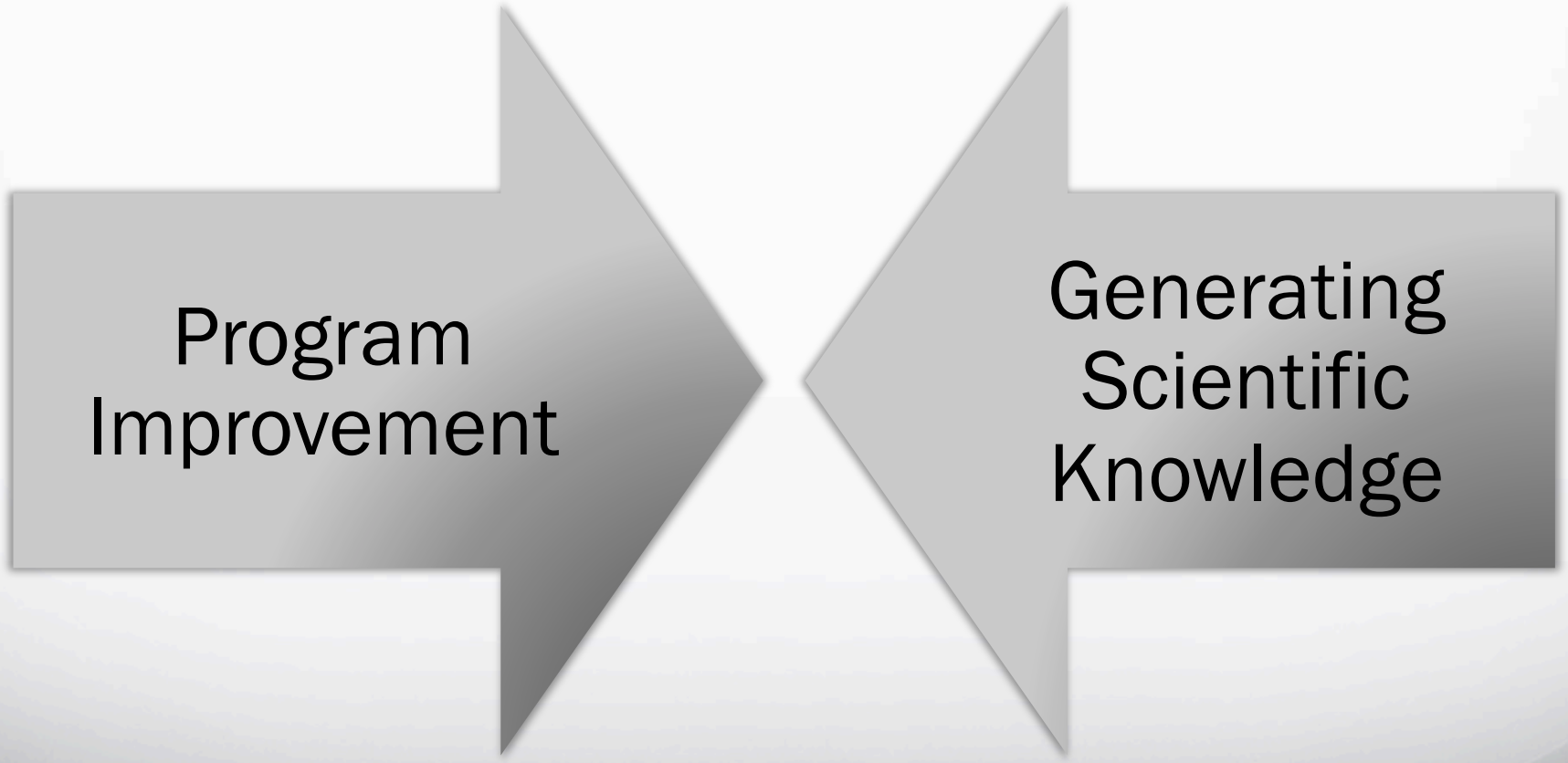
Disseminate Findings Widely

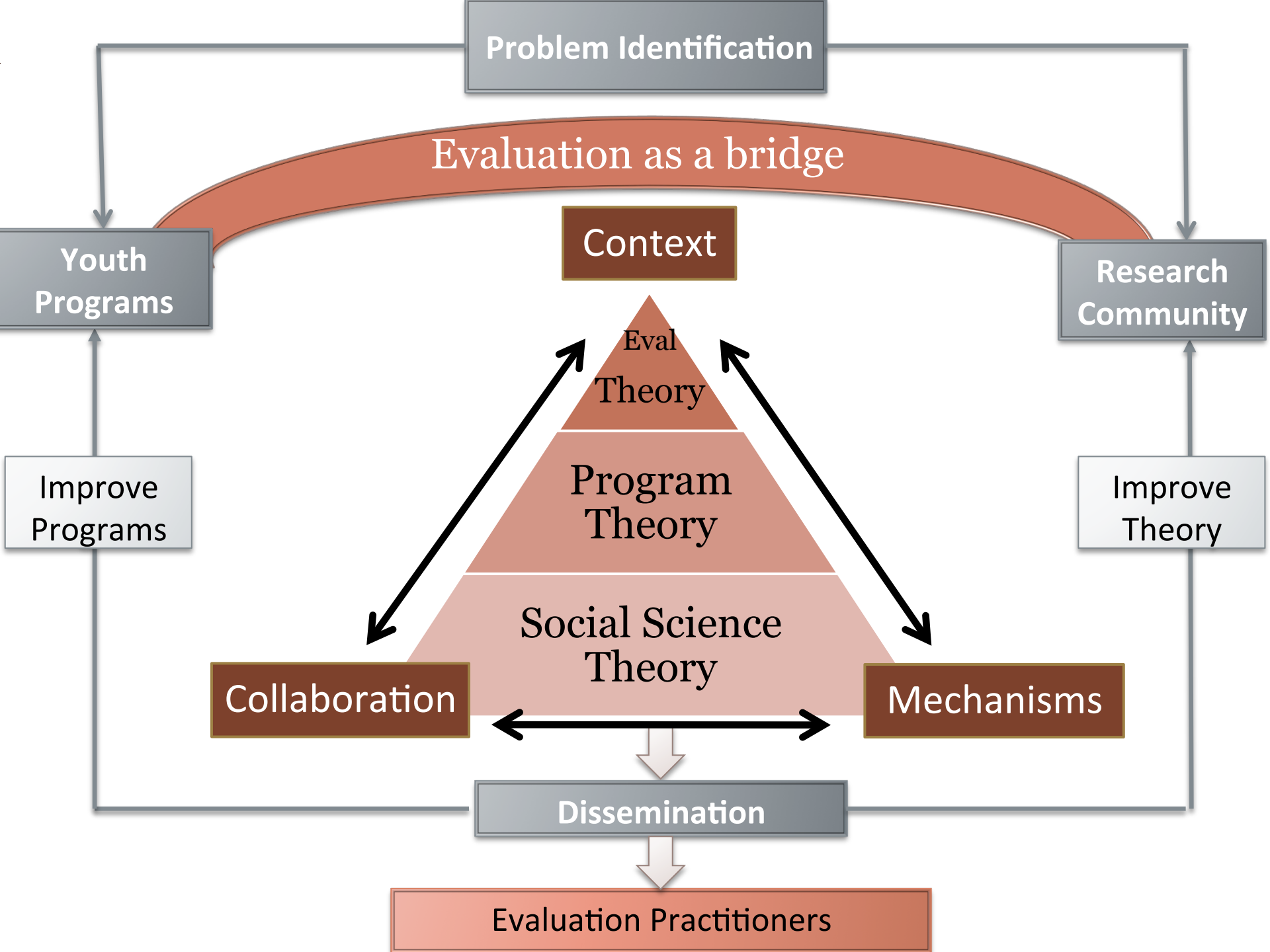
- Program Leadership & Staff:

Weekly Implementation Summaries	Evaluation Updates	Final Written Report	Final Findings Presentations

- Academic Audiences:
  - Conference presentations
  - Publications

Two Primary Purposes

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Questions or Comments?

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