

Testing Assumptions in Evaluation Capacity Building: Evidence to Inform Models & Enhance Practice

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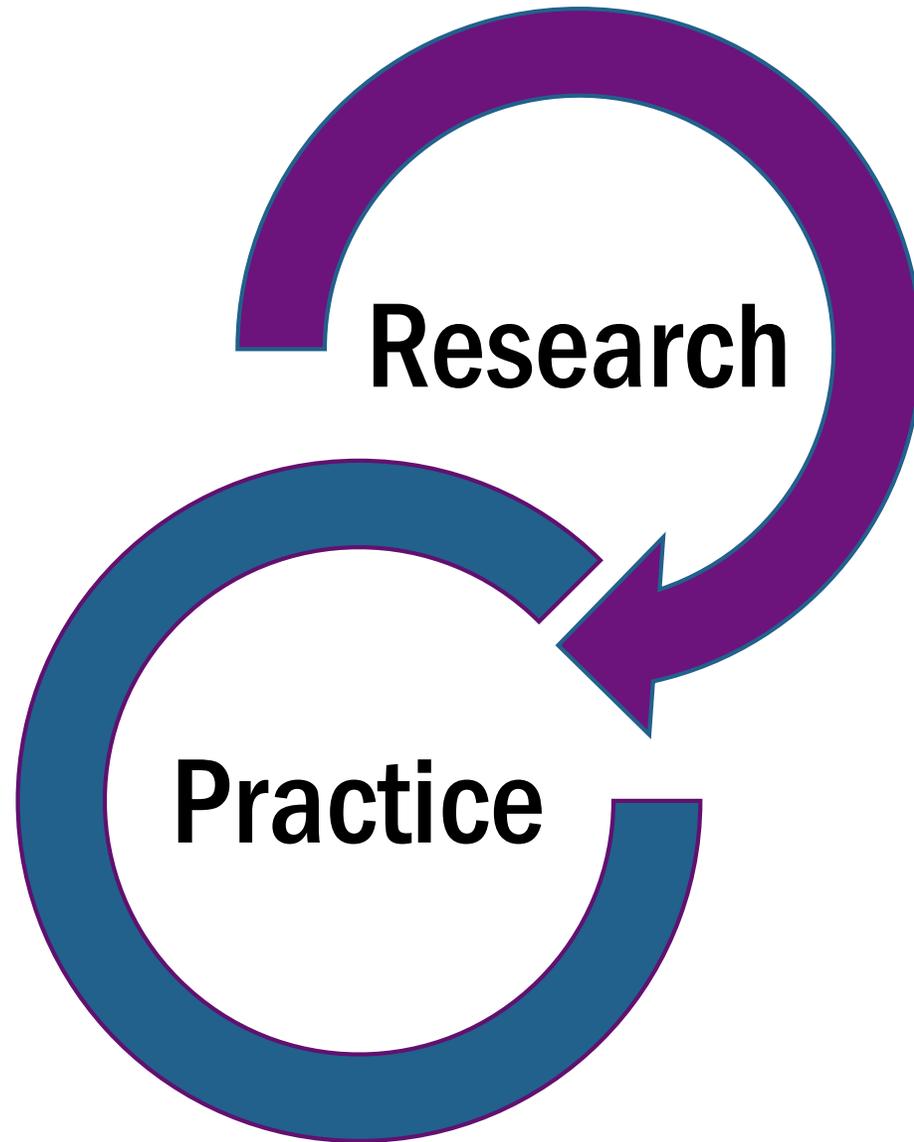
Chair Jennifer Villalobos, MA

Discussant Leslie Fierro, PhD

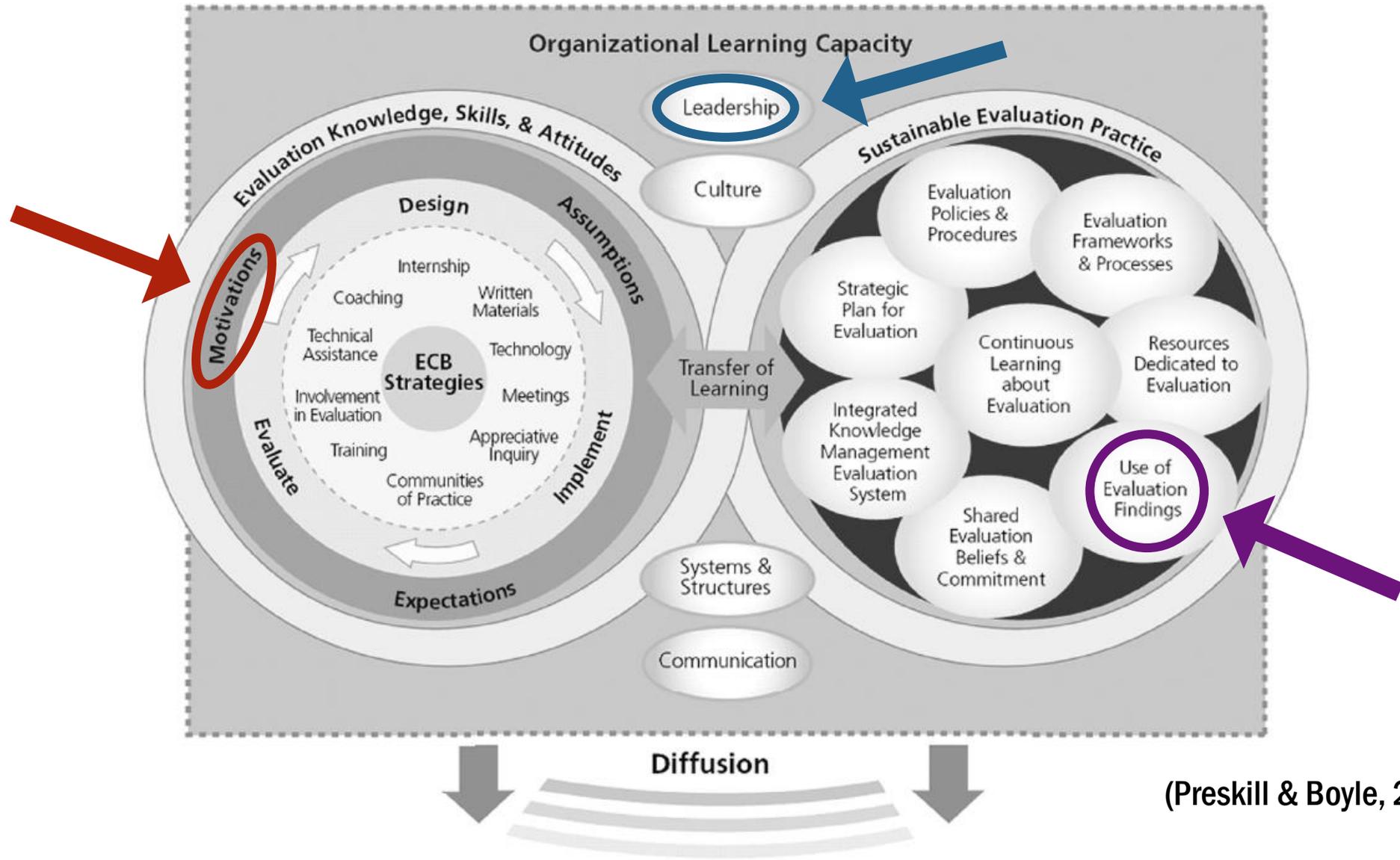


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A Multidisciplinary Model of Evaluation Capacity Building (ECB)



(Preskill & Boyle, 2008)

Exploring the Motivations for ECB in Nonprofits

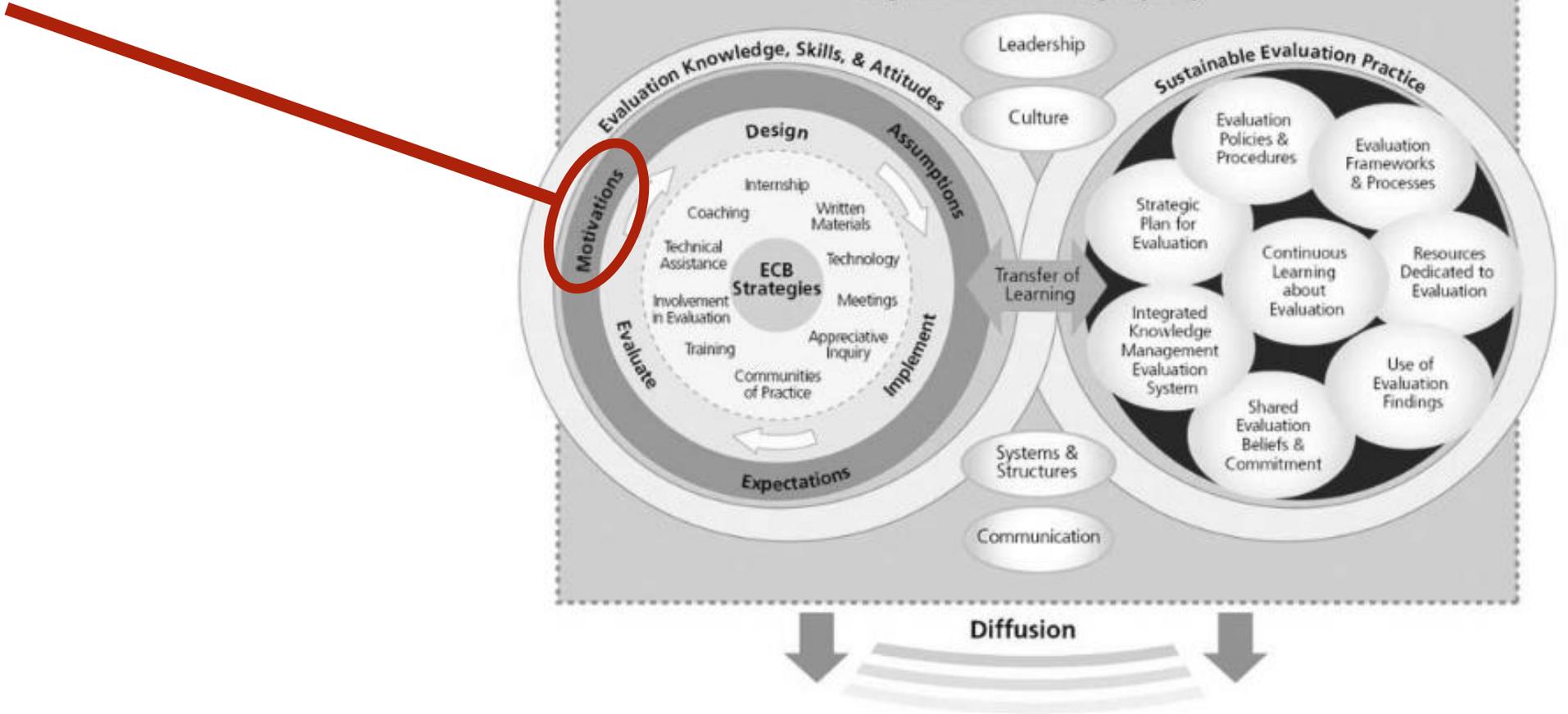


Piper T. Grandjean Targos, MA
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Ascending Edge Creative Evaluation



**What motivates
organizations
to build
evaluation
capacity?**

Motivation



Understanding motivation will help explain which orgs are most likely pursue and benefit from ECB efforts.

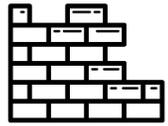
But what are these motives?

Internal and External

- Changes in the org
- Leadership mandate
- Supportive leadership
- Eval champion
- Broad demand
- Desire to improve org
- Desire to increase eval responsibilities
- Answering programmatic questions
- Seeking new funding/resources
- Shortage of external evaluators
- Lack of internal eval knowledge
- Résumé building

- Accountability requirements
- Policy reforms
- Professional community interest
- Accreditation agencies that encourage innovation
- Desire to support policy-making and planning
- Changes in the external environment

Nonprofits are unique.



Underdeveloped infrastructure



High staff turnover



Limited time to conduct evaluations



Limited resources



**Accountability to governmental
agencies and funding sources**

Explanatory Sequential Mixed-Methods

Phase I - Surveys



16 participants from 11 orgs

- Executive Director
- Evaluator/Analyst



Phase II - Focus Groups



10 participants from 8 orgs

- Executive Director
- Evaluator/Analyst



5 ECB researchers

**There was a lot of variety
in the small sample.**



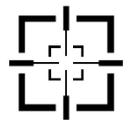
Age:

<2yr → >50yr



Size :

<5FTE → >50FTE



Sector:

Education, Health, Human Services

Internal motivations were rated more influential than **external** motivations.

Creating knowledge to **improve** their programs

Current accountability requirements

Supportive org **leadership**

Reaching future funding sources

Funders vary, and so do the data.

- Corporations want “fluffy nuggets”
- Foundations want “complex”
- Governments want the bottom line
- Private donors want individual stories

Sectors also vary across orgs.

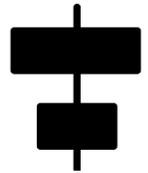
Different sectors may have different expectations on the kinds of evaluative information required.

- Norms regarding level of sophistication**
- Feasibility of data collection**

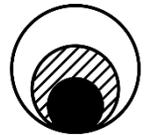
Other considerations



Perception of evaluation



Alignment in the expectations for evaluation



Relationship with org size

There are additional motivations to add to the literature.

Internal

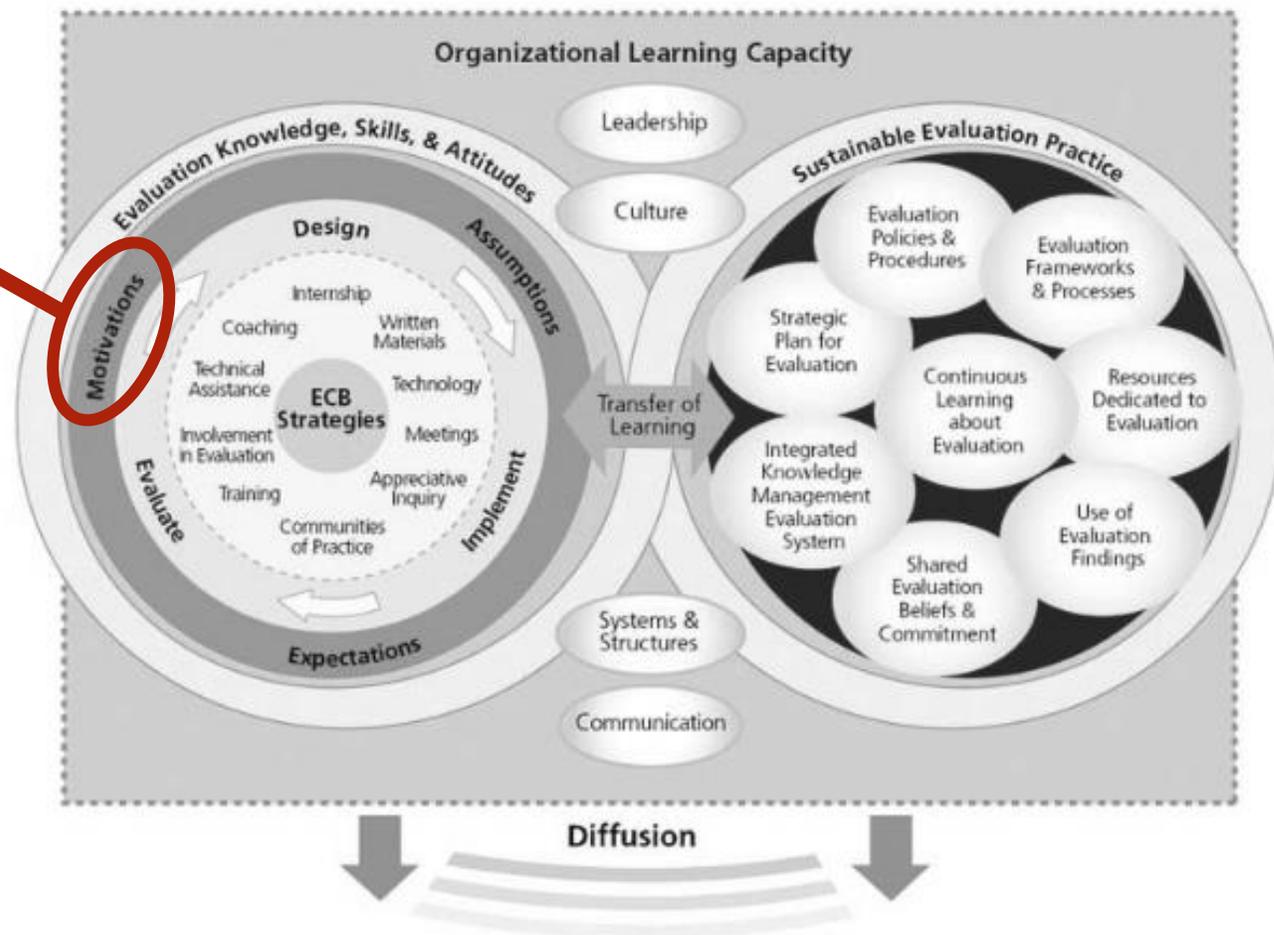
- Identify effective program components
- Ensure implementation fidelity
- Create information for program expansion
- Create a position dedicated to evaluation
- Prepare for future eval studies

External

- Remain competitive with other peer orgs
- Align with eval norms in the sector
- Justify org practices
- Demonstrate the value of the program
- Explain their outcomes within the environmental context

Orgs are motivated to tell their **story** to current and future funders, and to **improve** their program.

Factors are complex, and have many possible moderators that should be explored further.





The Development and Field Testing of the ECB Leadership Theory of Change

Albertina (Aly) Lopez, PhD

Senior Associate

Center for Evaluation Innovation

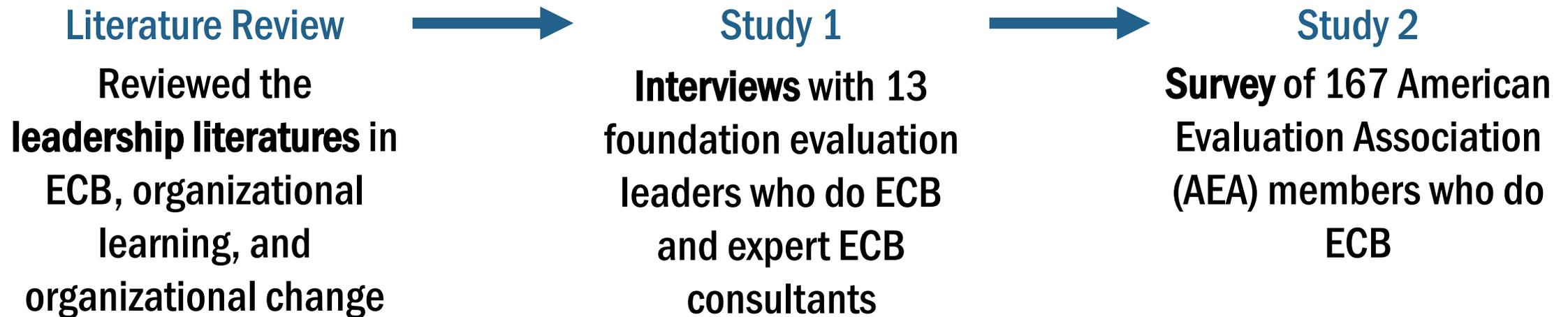
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**My
Point**

We need to be more explicit and strategic in developing leaders and leveraging leadership to make ECB stick.

I used literature from multiple disciplines and mixed-methods to develop, explore, and test the ECB Leadership Theory of Change.



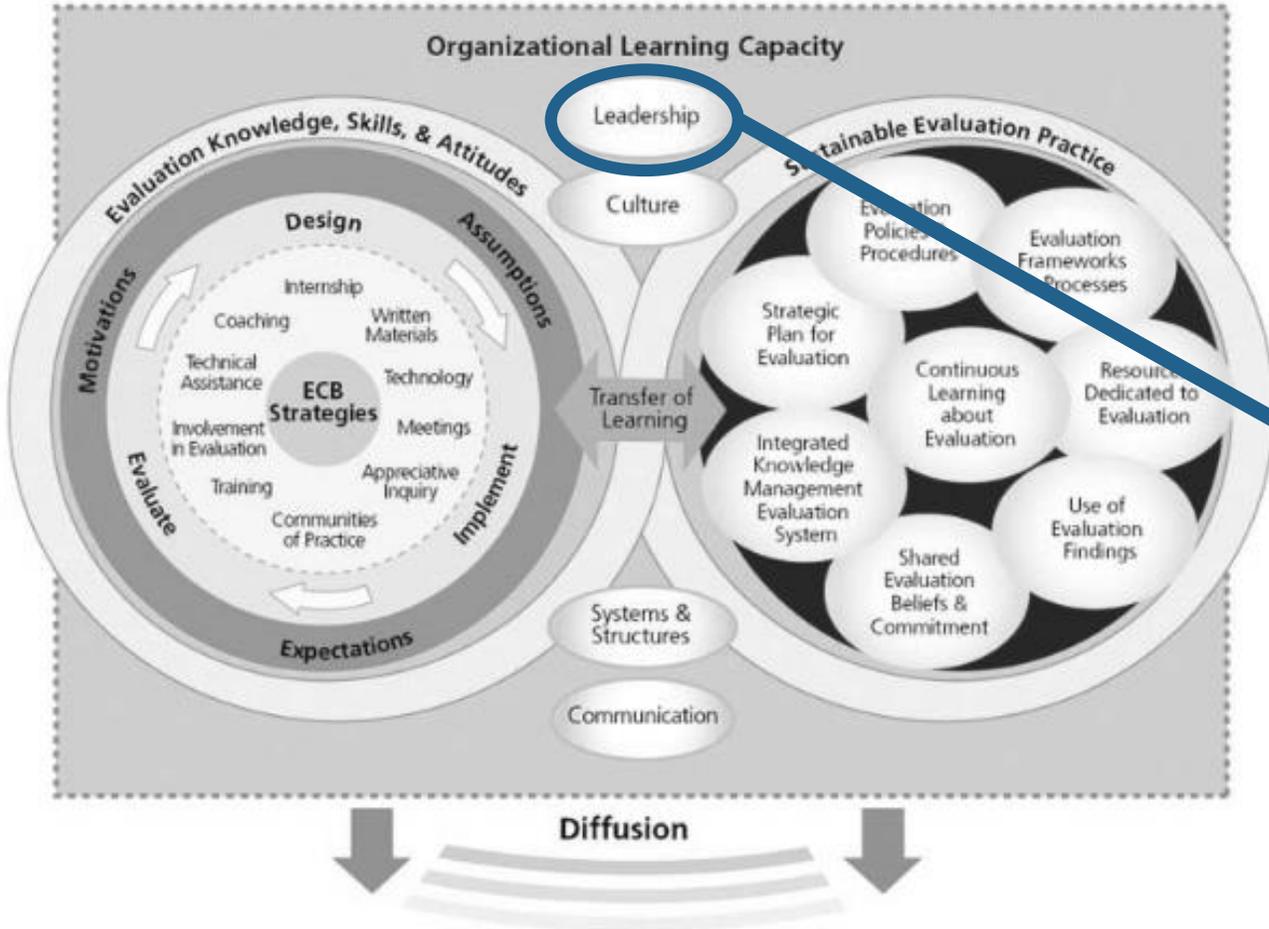
What I am sharing today is what the **literature** and my **survey** tell us about how leaders affect ECB.





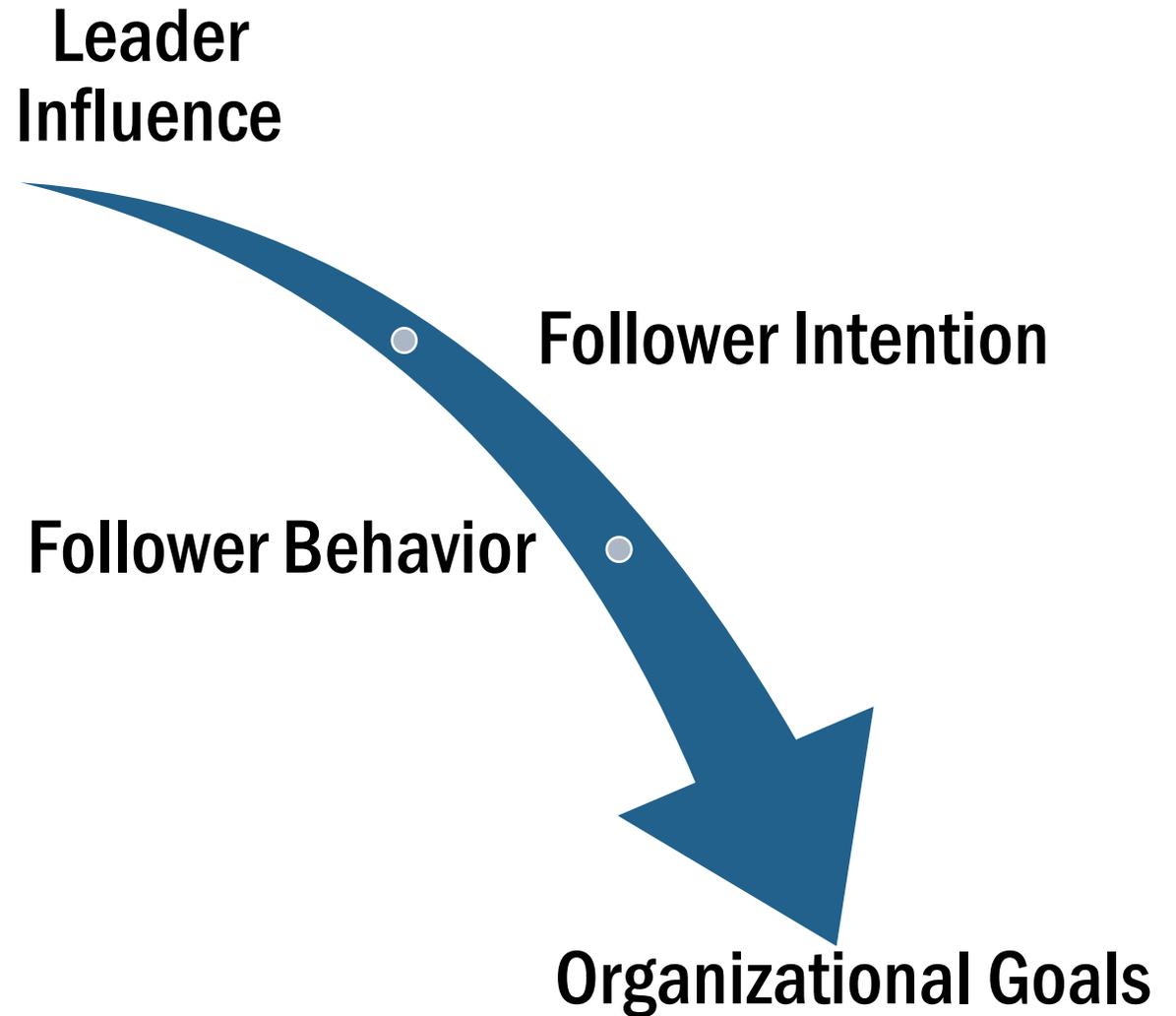
Why is leadership important in ECB?

**What the Literature
Says.**



Leadership

Organizational learning and change research suggests that leaders influence staff intention and behavior to get to goals.



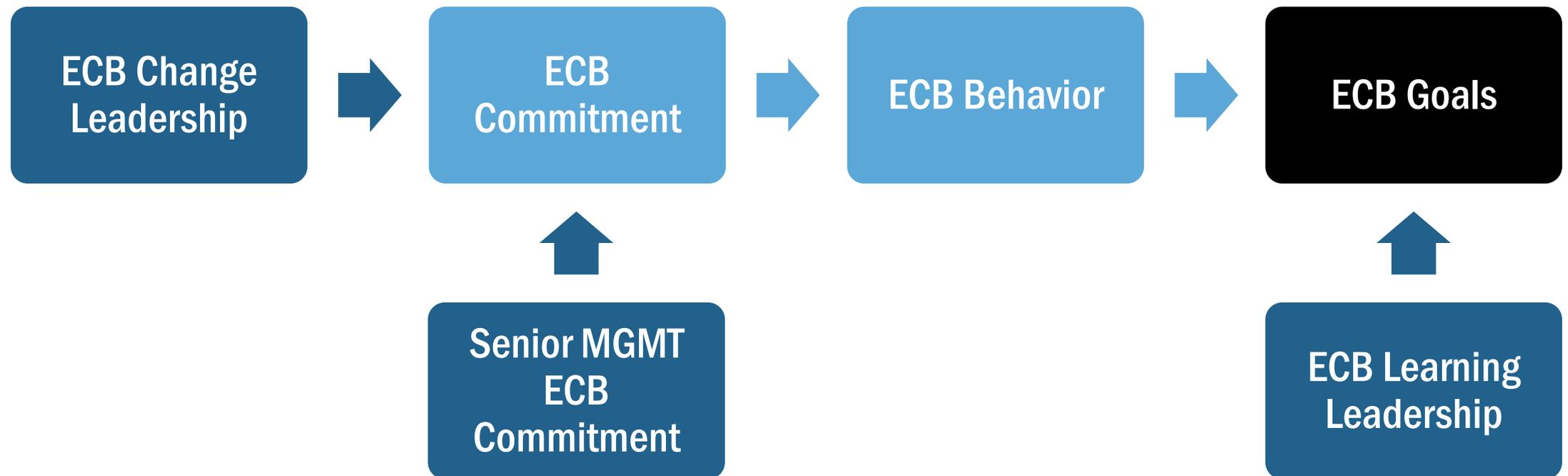
ECB leadership

is the process of facilitating organizational change and learning in evaluation capacity as well as influencing others to build and sustain the organization's ability to do or use evaluation.

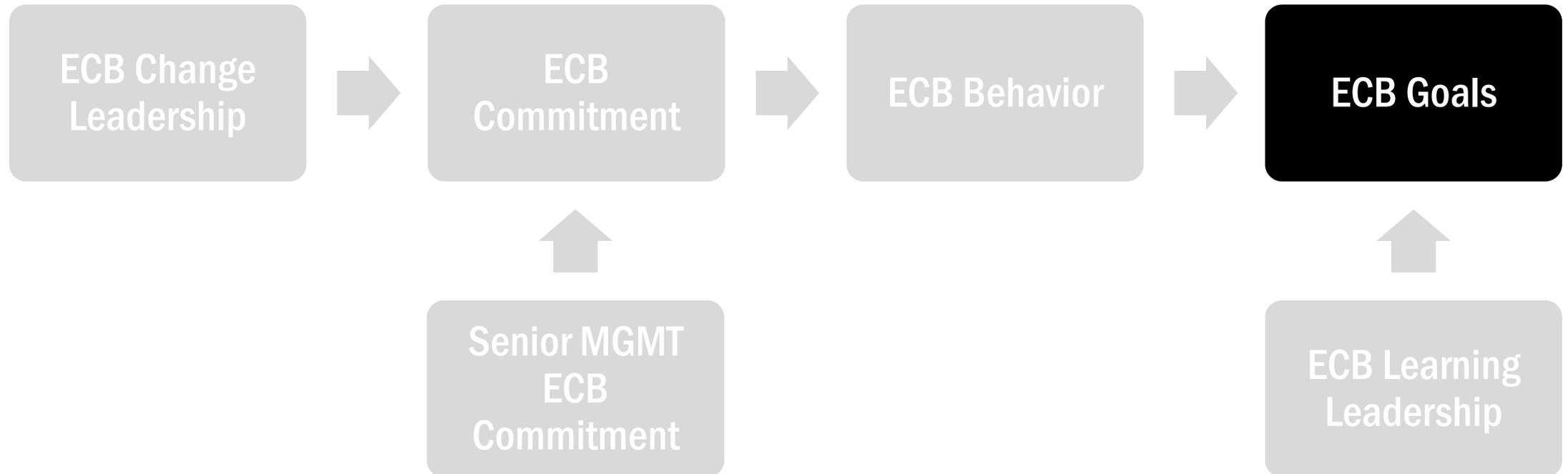


**Working
Definition**

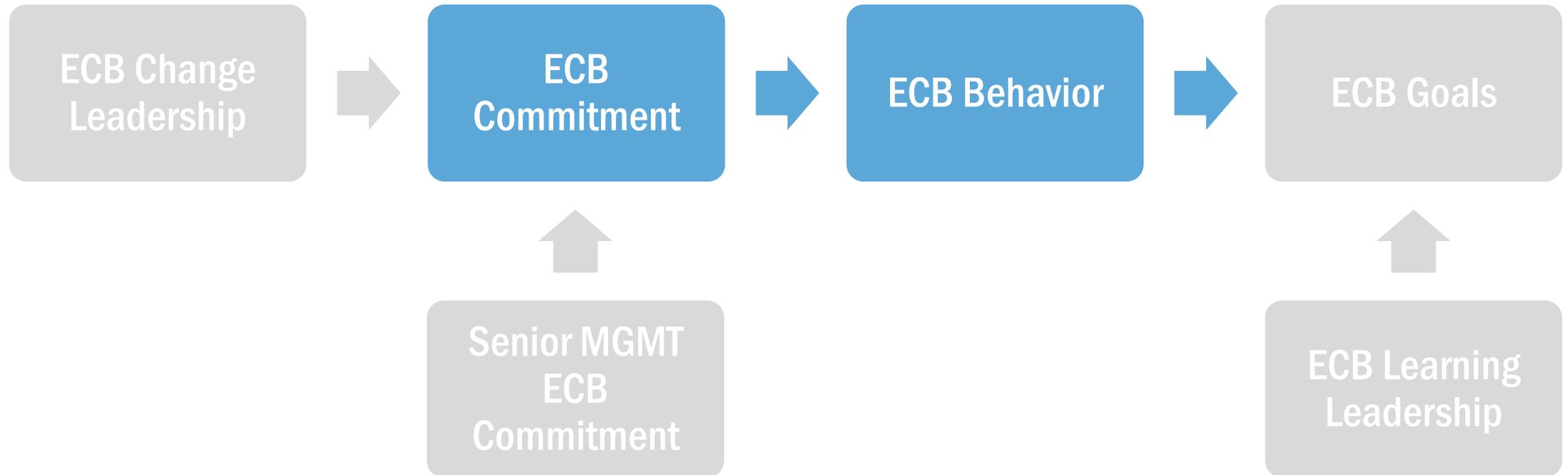
I developed a **theory of change based on leadership literatures in ECB, organizational change, and organizational learning.**



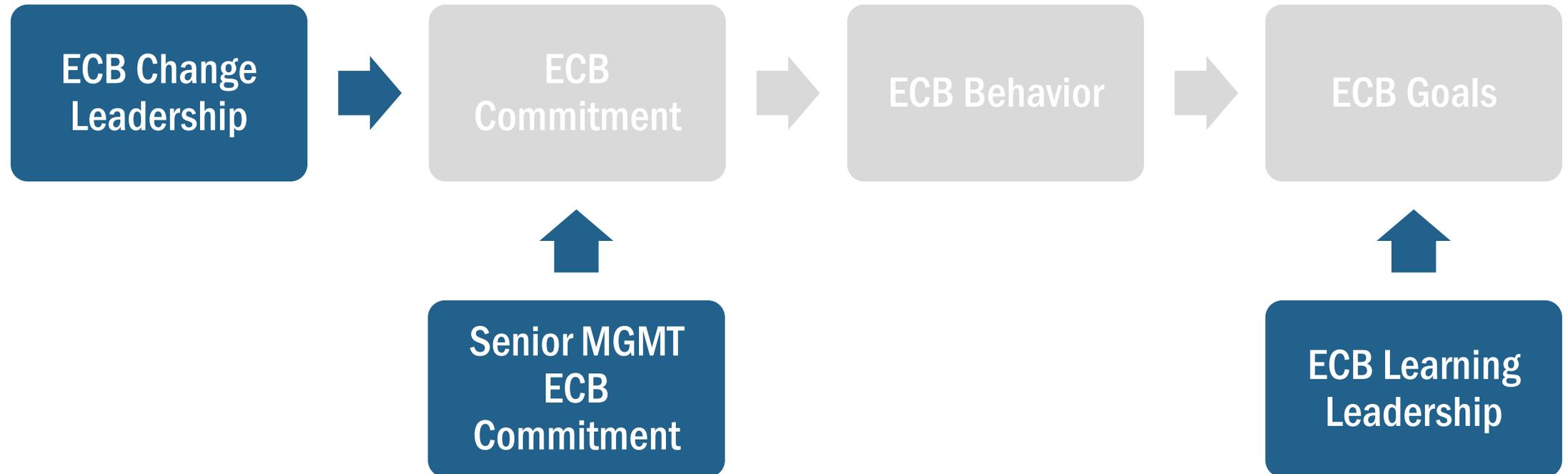
We want to achieve **desired goals** in **evaluation capacity building**.

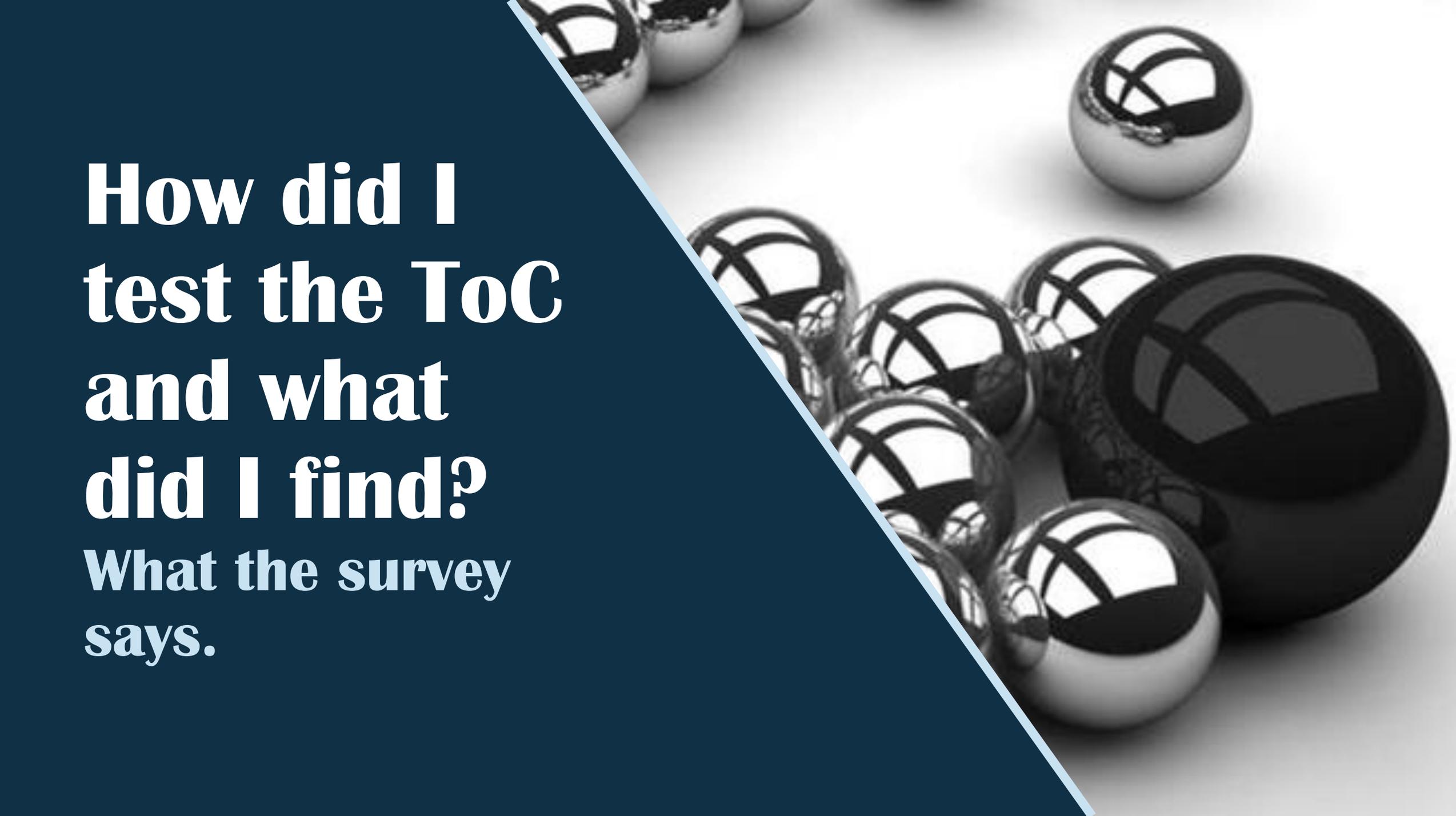


Staff commitment and behavior matter in getting there.



Different kinds of leadership at all management levels shape ECB commitment, behavior, and goals.

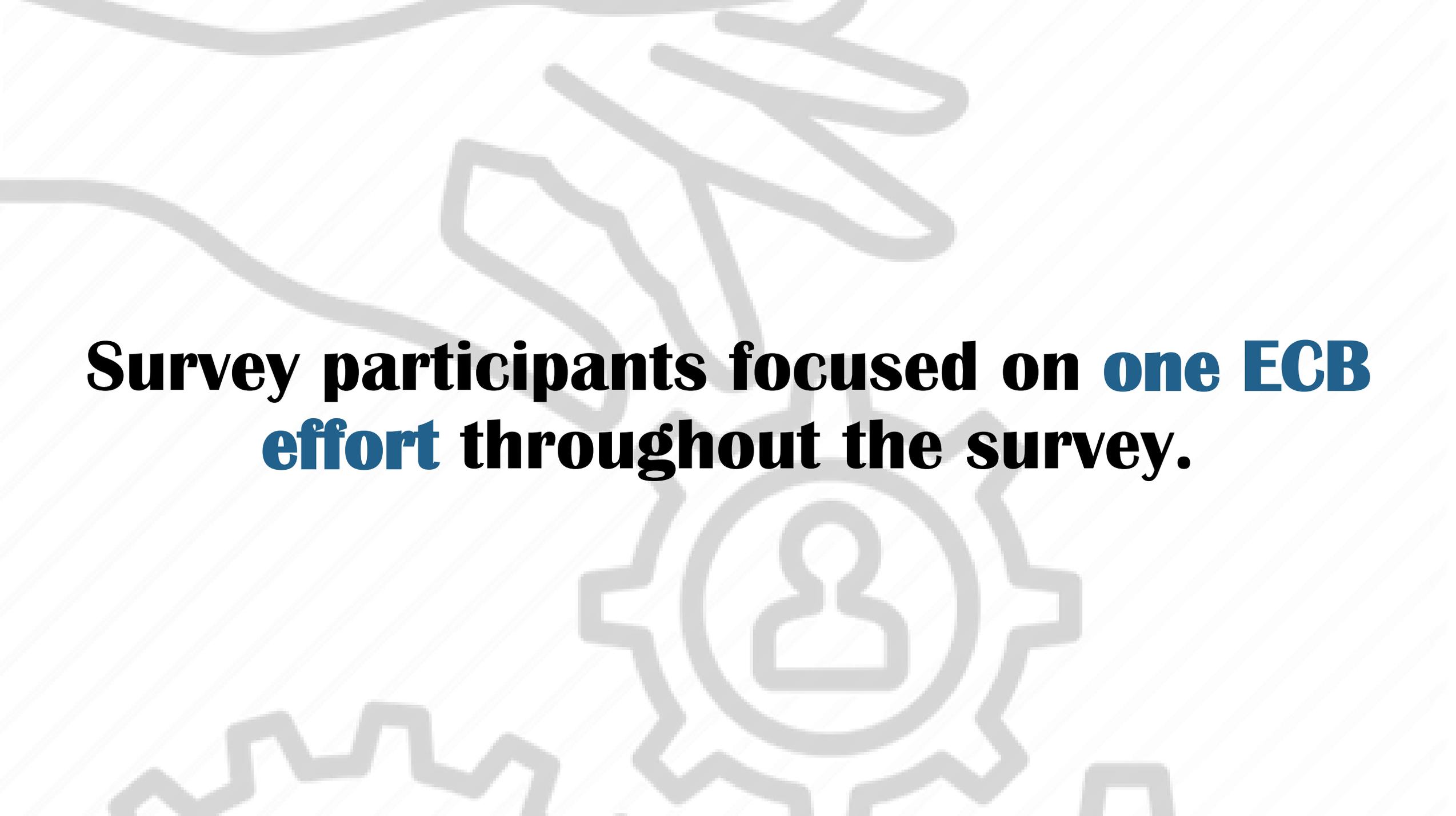




**How did I
test the ToC
and what
did I find?
What the survey
says.**

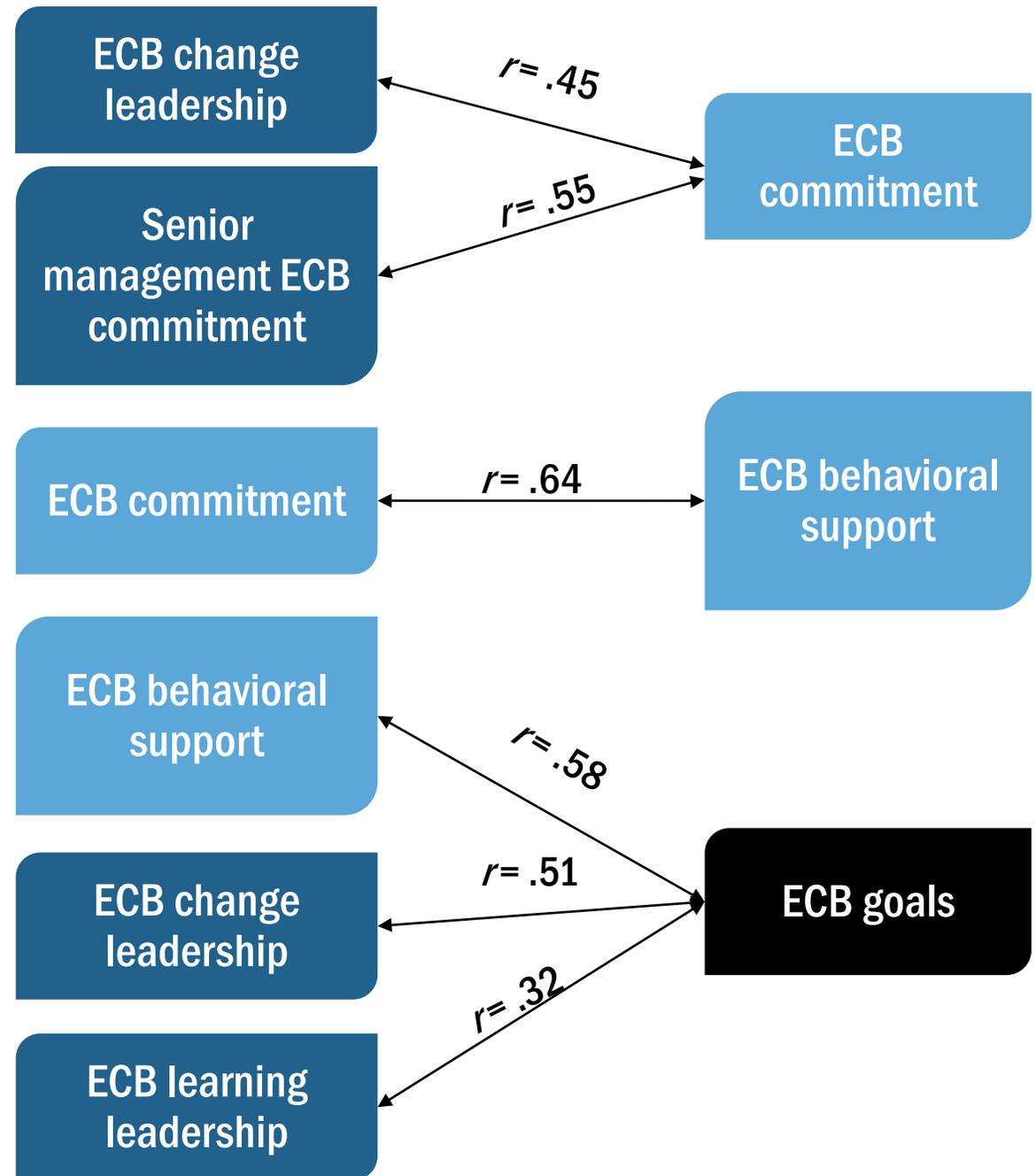


**I surveyed 167 AEA
members who do ECB.**

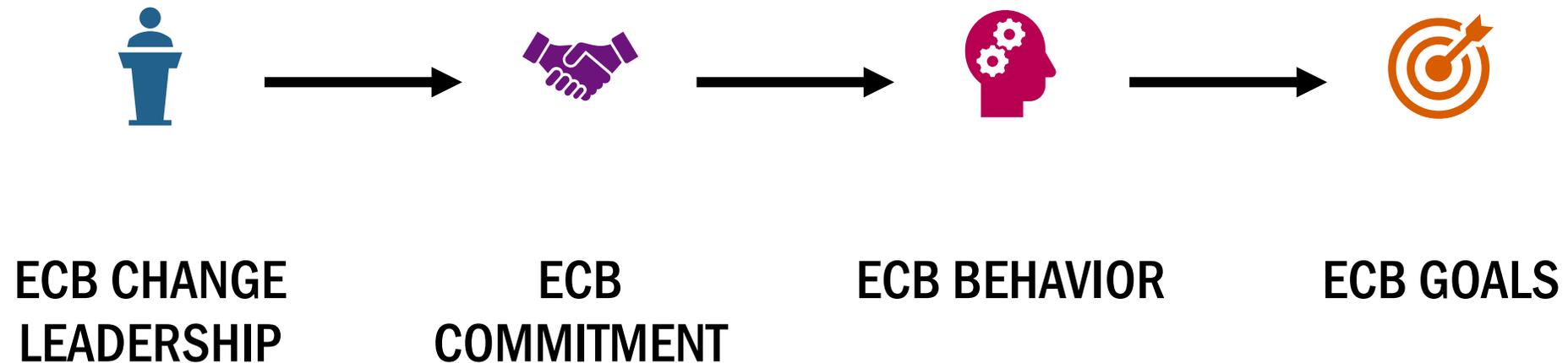
The background features a light gray, hand-drawn style illustration of several interlocking gears. In the center, a gear contains a stylized human figure icon. The overall aesthetic is clean and modern, with a focus on mechanical and human elements.

Survey participants focused on **one ECB effort throughout the survey.**

Strong relationships exist among the ECB Leadership Theory of Change components.

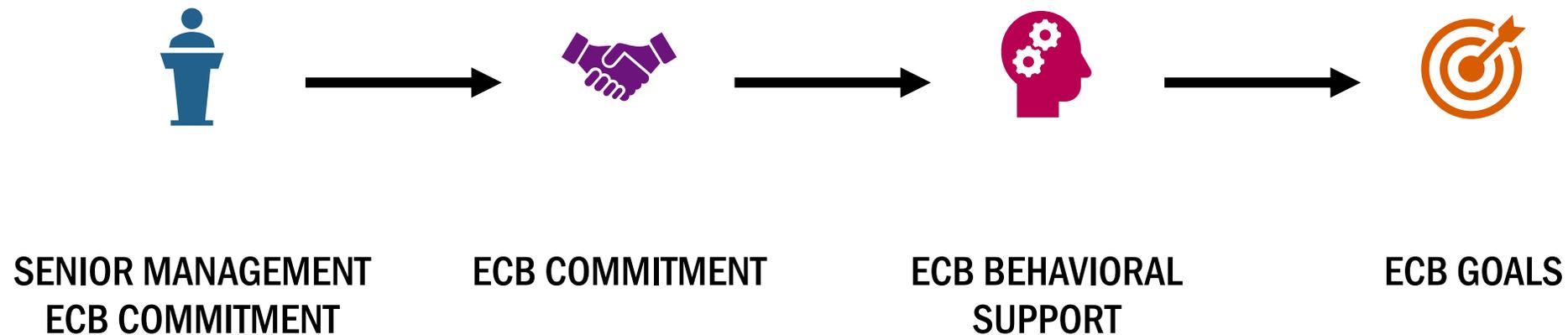


As predicted, change leadership influenced greater progress in ECB goals through staff commitment and behavior.



Indirect effect (β) = .07, SE = .03, $p < .001$

In a post hoc analysis, senior management commitment related to more progress in ECB goals through commitment and behavior.

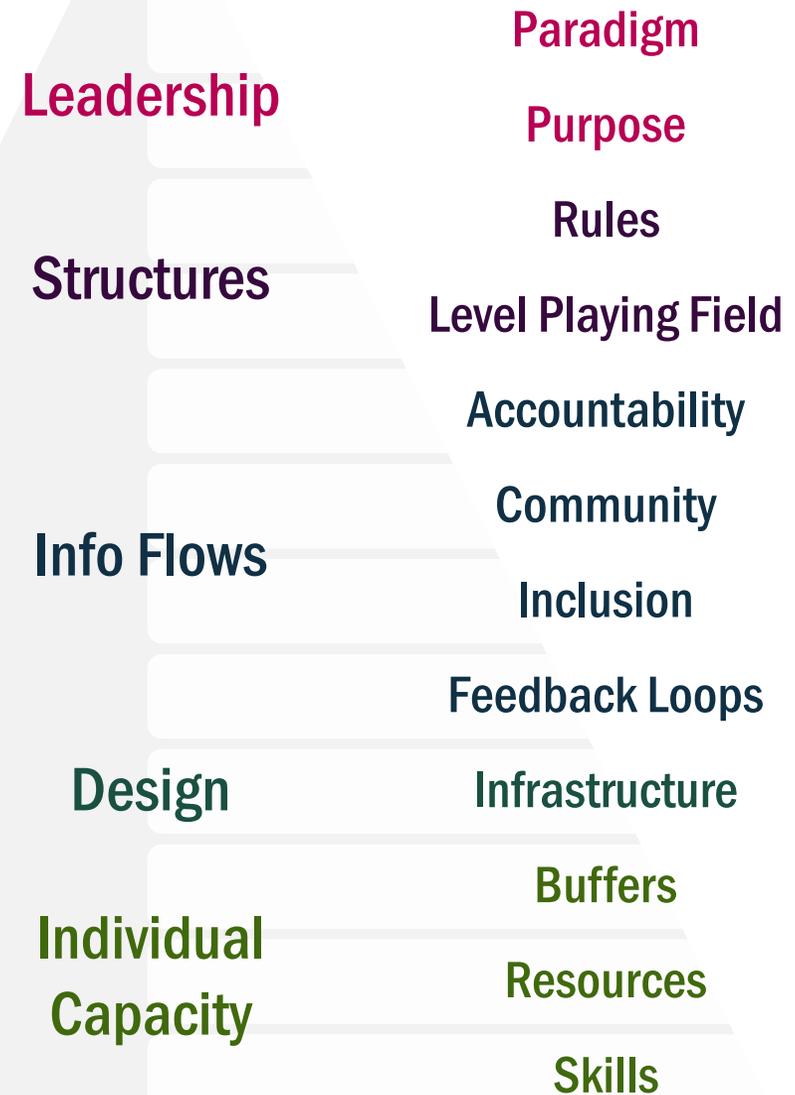


Indirect effect (β) = .13, SE = .04, $p < .001$

**Why does
it matter?
My thoughts on
our research
and practice.**

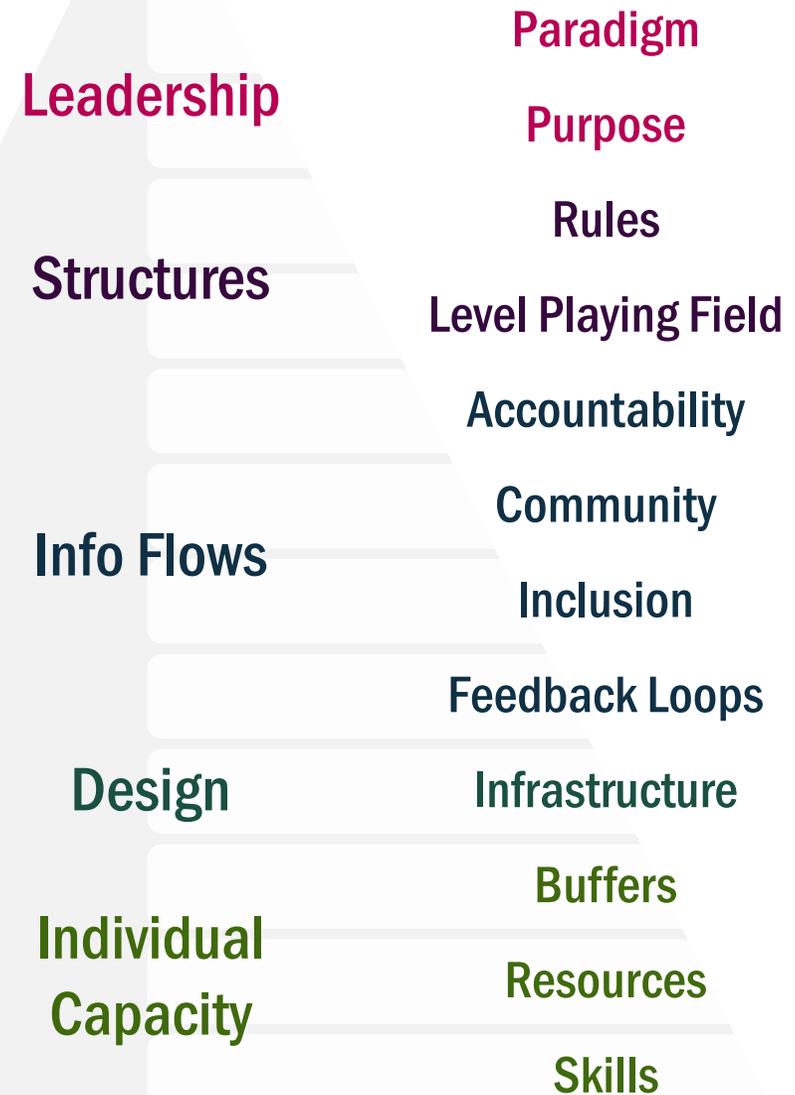


Organizations are **systems**.



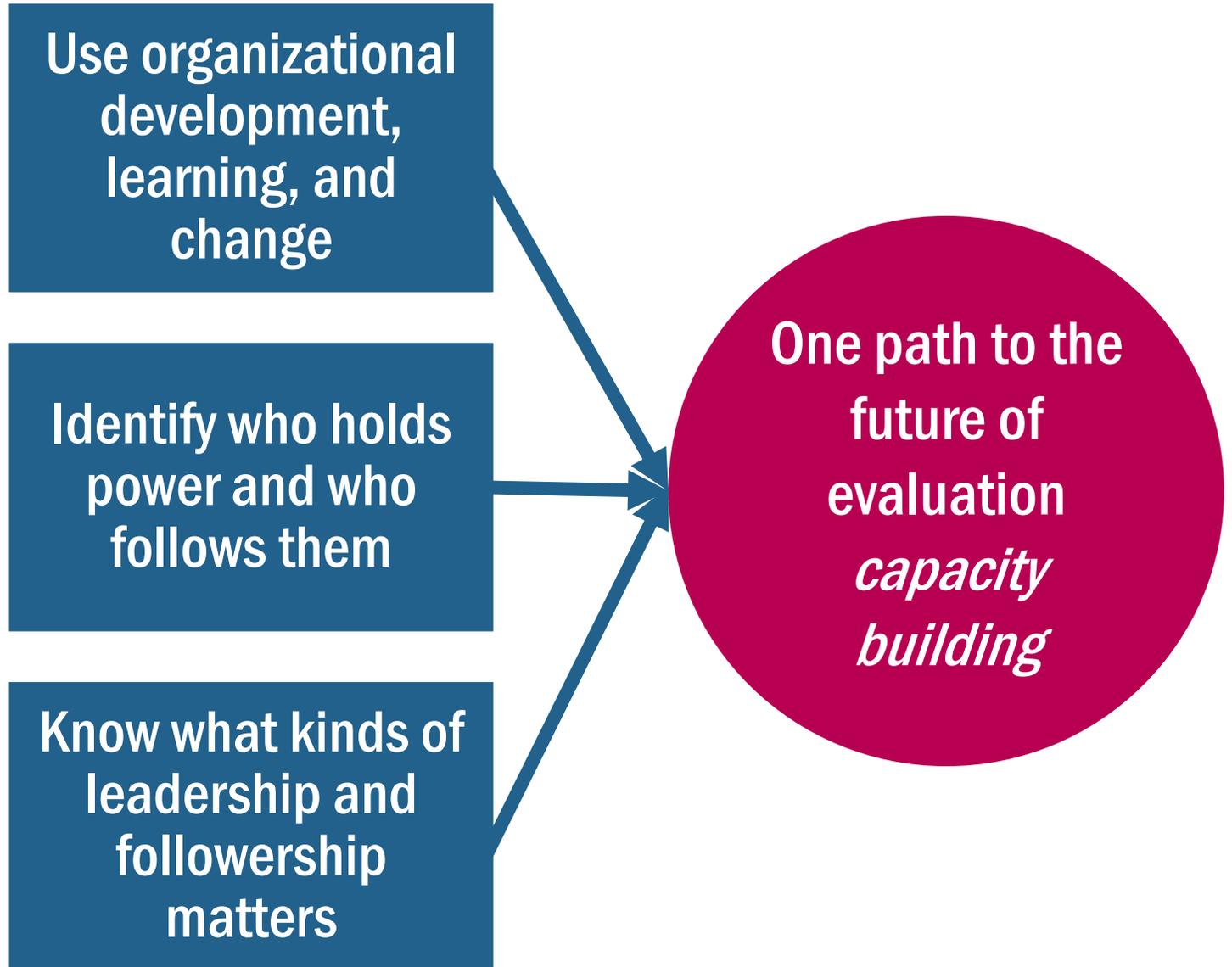
*This model was produced in the article "What will it take for philanthropy to learn," which adapts Donella Meadows' systems change work.

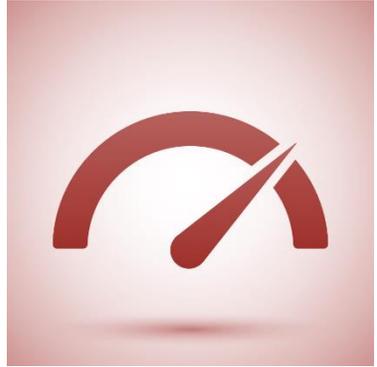
We need to use higher leverage points like leadership to get ECB efforts to stick.



*This model was produced in the article "What will it take for philanthropy to learn," which adapts Donella Meadows' systems change work.

**We must
move our
ECB
research
and practice
forward to
pull higher
leverage
points.**



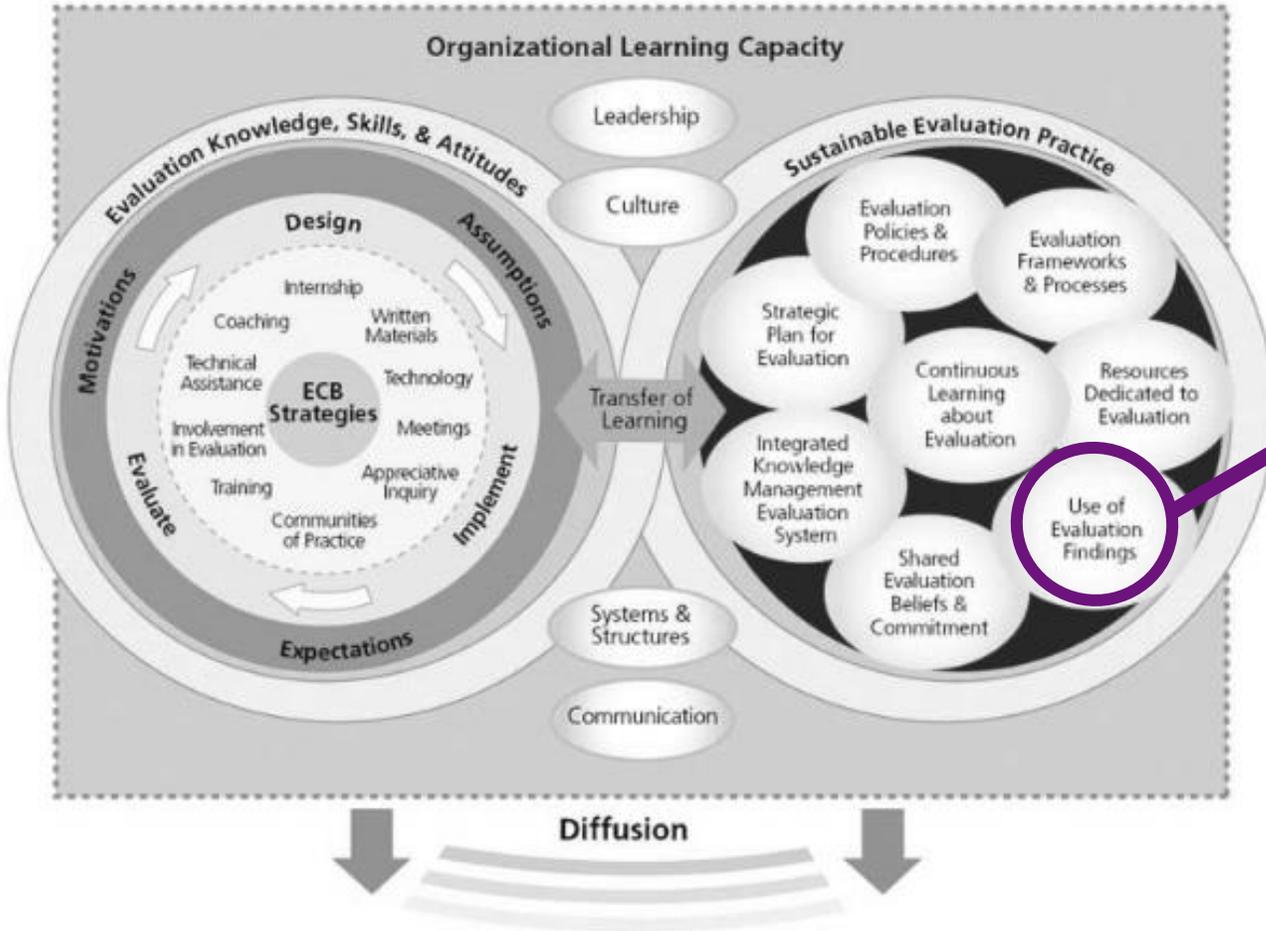


Moving the Needle on Program

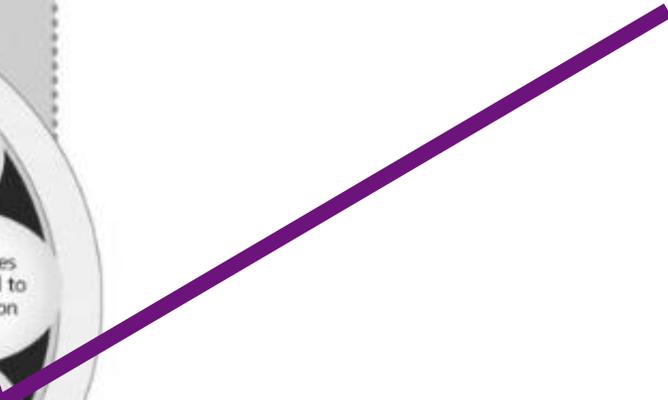
Quality: An Examination of the Organizational Factors that Influence Evaluation Use for Program Improvement

Silvana McCormick, PhD
Executive Director
Redwood Consulting Collective





USE



Barriers to Impactful Social Programing

- **Program implementation failures**

(Dane & Schneider 1998; Durlack & Dupre, 2008; Fixsen et al., 2005; Wandersman et al., 2008)

- **Difficulty facilitating meaningful use of evaluation for program improvement**

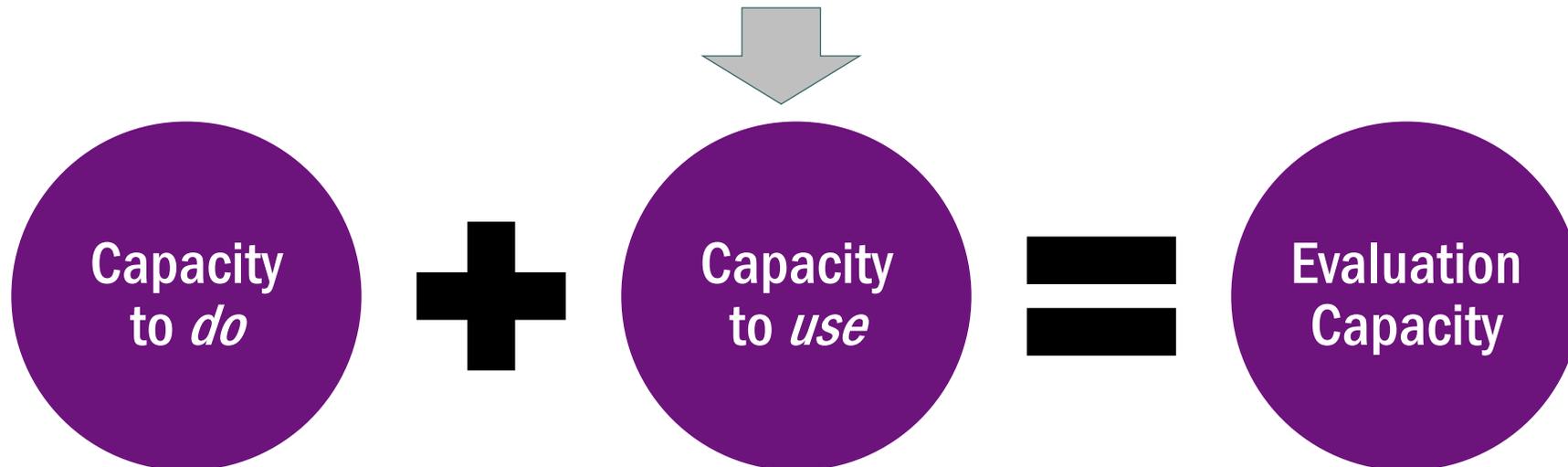
(Caracelli, 2000; Mark & Henry, 2004; Bourgeois & Cousins, 2013)

- **Low program capacity for comprehensive evaluation**

(Carman & Fredericks, 2010; Newcomer 2004; Stevenson et al. 2002)

Capacity for Learning & Improvement

Organizational Learning Capacity

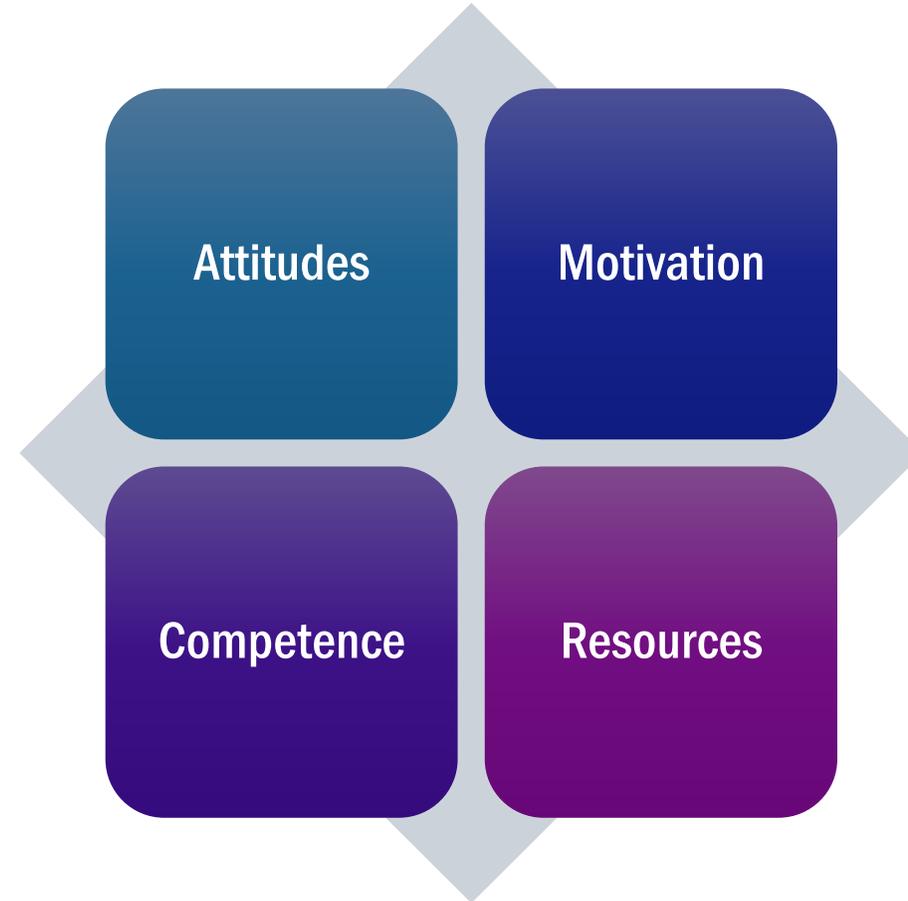


(Cousins, Goh, Elliot, & Bourgeois, 2014)

Evaluation Capacity & Program Improvement

Evaluation Capacity: An organization's internal ability to meaningfully engage in evaluation activities.

(Fetterman & Wandersman, 2005)

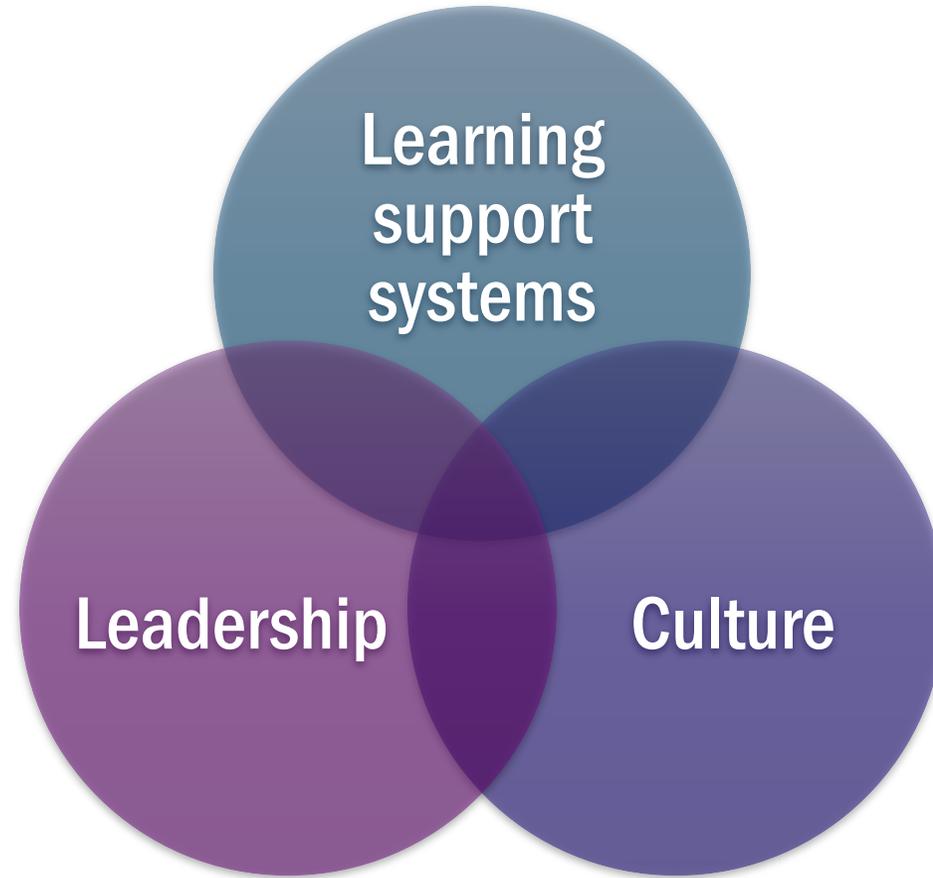


(Alaimo, 2008; Bourgeois et al., 2008; Carman & Fredericks, 2010; Gibbs et al., 2002;)

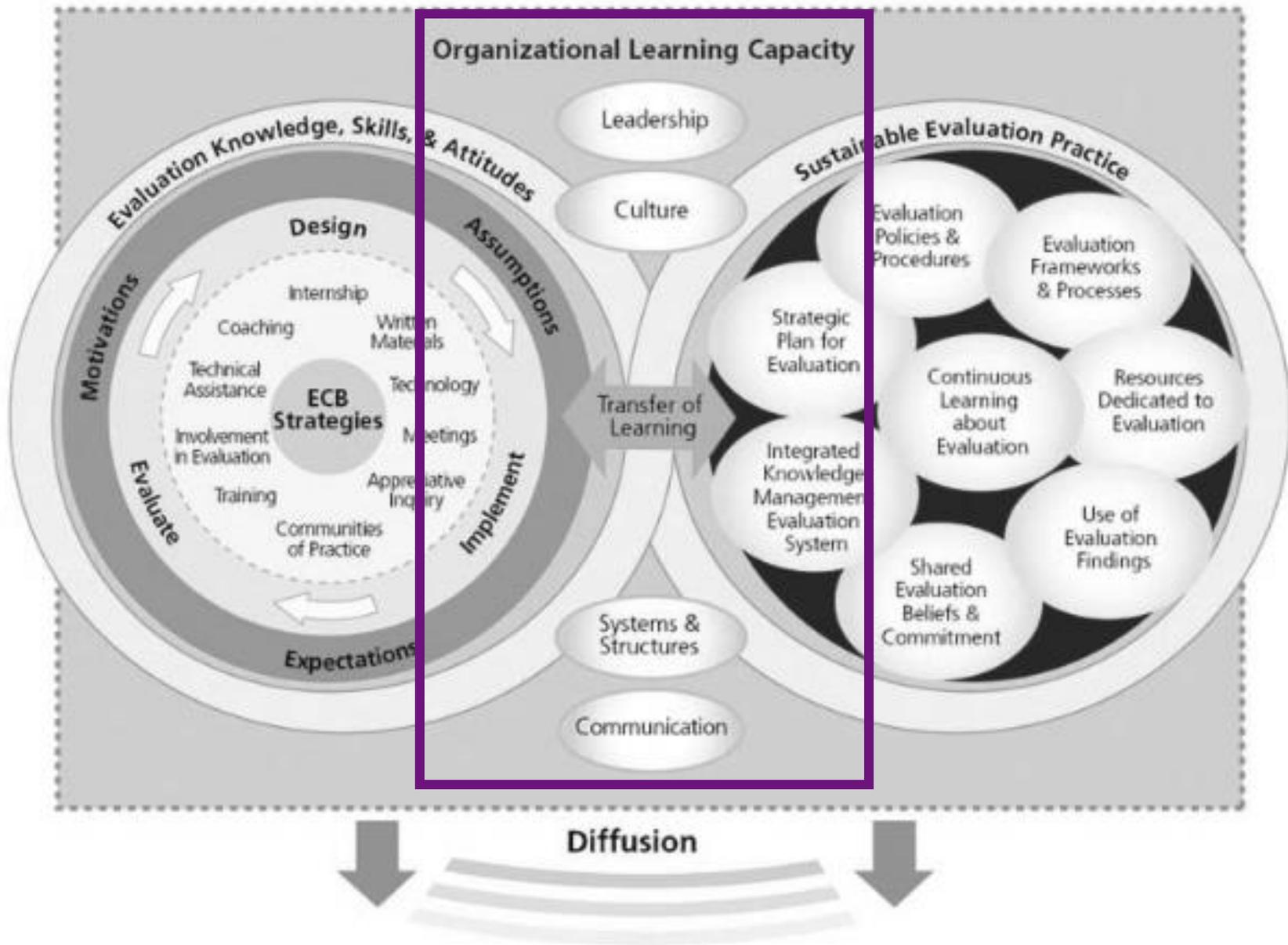
Organizational Learning Capacity & Program Improvement

OLC: The ability of the organization to implement the appropriate management practices, structures, and procedures that facilitate and encourage learning

(Goh, 2003)



(Garvin, 2008; Goh, 2003; Marsick & Watkins, 2003)



Evaluation Practice & Program Improvement

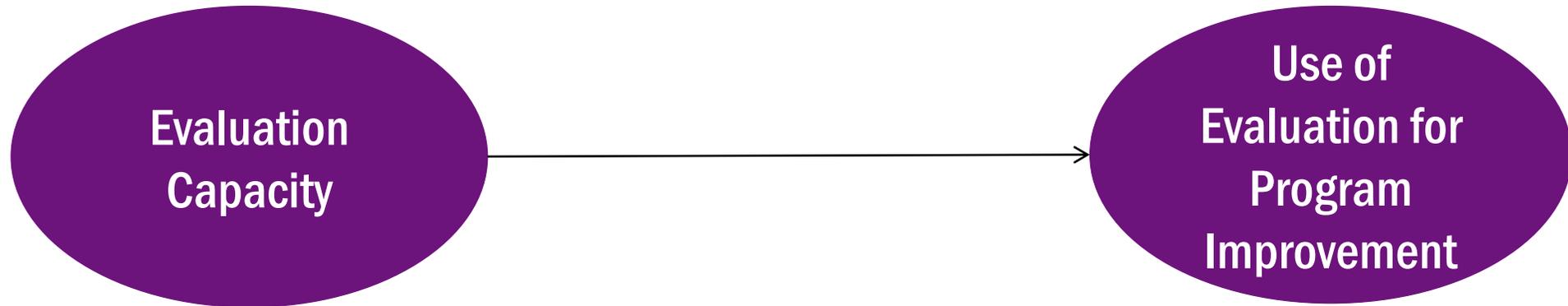
Formative Evaluation of Program Implementation & Quality:

The activities that provide insight into program functioning to inform quality improvement efforts.

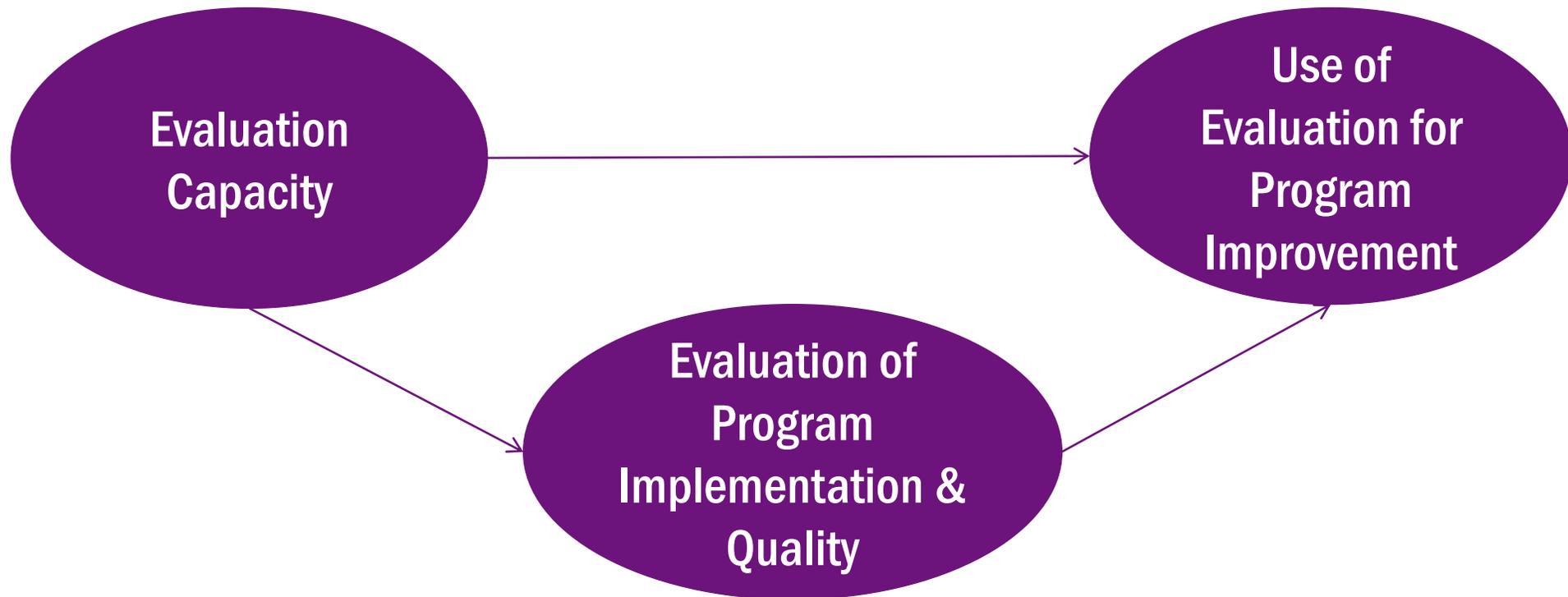


(Chinman, et al., 2004; Fixsen et al., 2005; Wandersman et al., 2008)

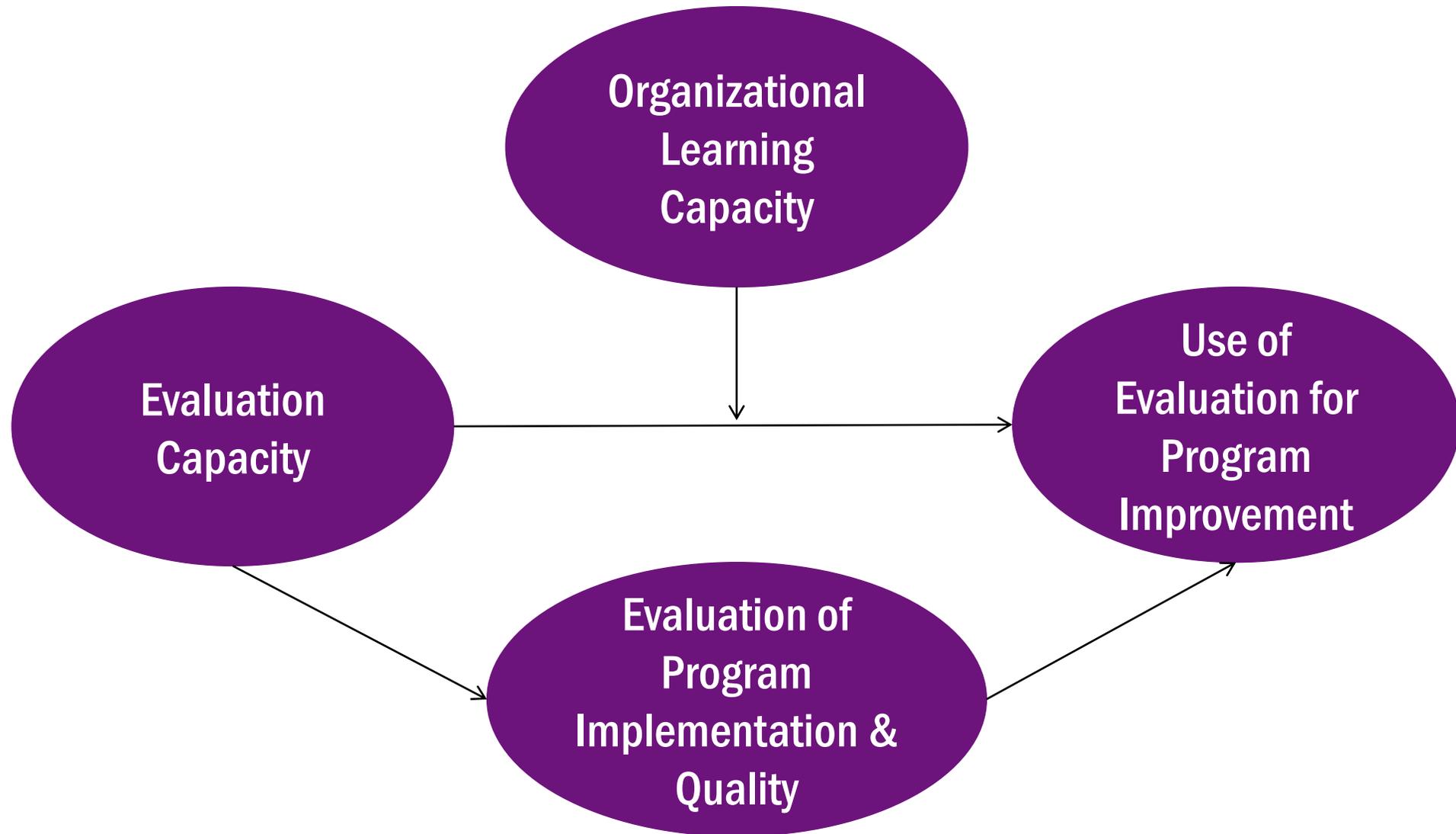
Conceptual Model



Conceptual Model



Conceptual Model



Study Context: Expanded Learning

- Academic and enrichment services outside of school-day
- 10.2 million served annually
- Extensive variability in quality and impact

SB 1221 Mandate

Publicly funded ELP programs must develop and implement data-driven quality improvement plans that align to CA Quality Standards

Overview of the Research Design

Sequential explanatory mixed-methods
design (Creswell, 2006)

Study One: Survey of agency directors

Study Two: Exemplar agency interviews

Agency Director Survey

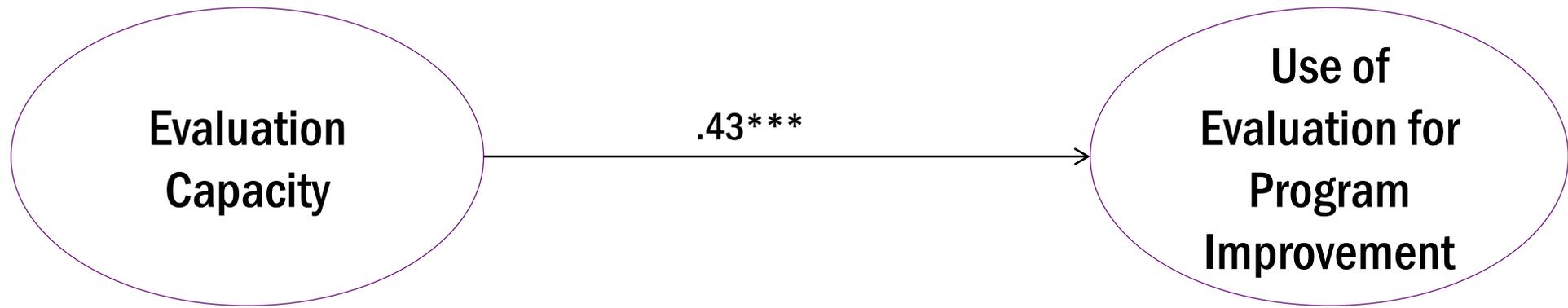
Participants: Executive directors or senior leadership team members of publicly funded ELP agencies (N=138)

Type of Organization	Not-for-Profit Organization	54%
	School District	38%
	County Office of Education	5%
	Academic Institution	2%
	Charter School	2%

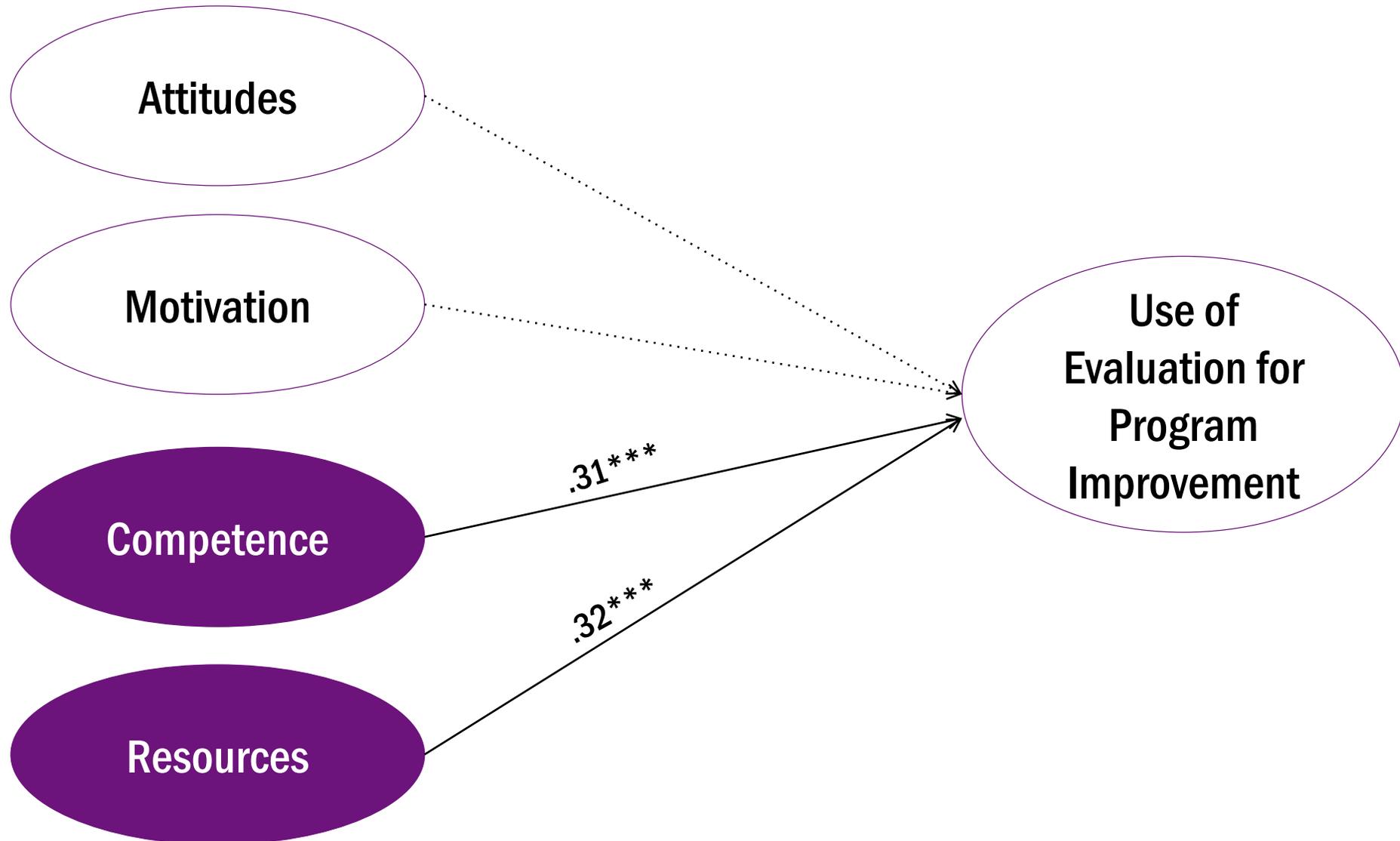
Measures:

1. **Evaluation Capacity** (Fierro, 2012; Taylor-Ritzler, Suarez-Balcazar, Garcia-Iriarte, Henry, & Balcazar, 2013)
2. **Organizational Learning Capacity (OLC)** (Marsick & Watkins, 2003; Watkins & Marsick, 1997; Yang, 2003)
3. **Evaluation of Program Implementation and Quality (Evaluation Practice)**
4. **Use of Evaluation for Program Improvement (Evaluation Use)**

Test of the Conceptual Model

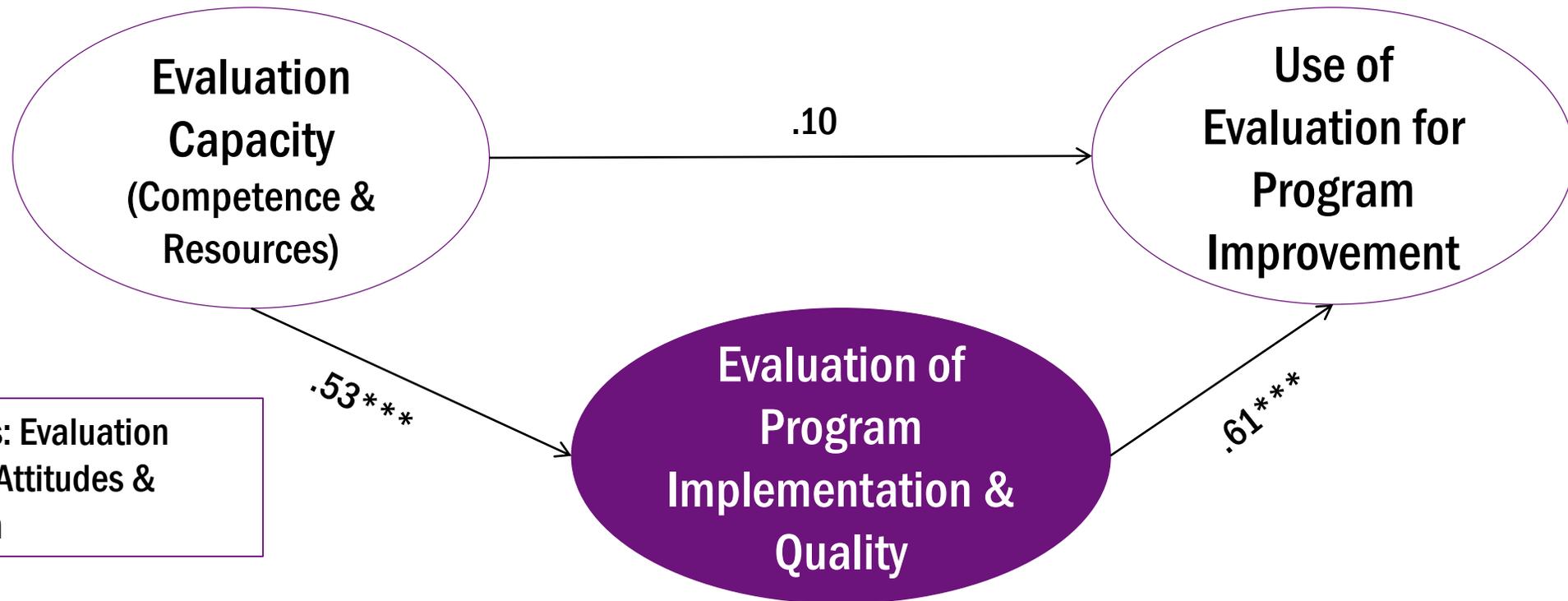


✓ H1: Higher evaluation capacity is associated with greater use of evaluation for program improvement

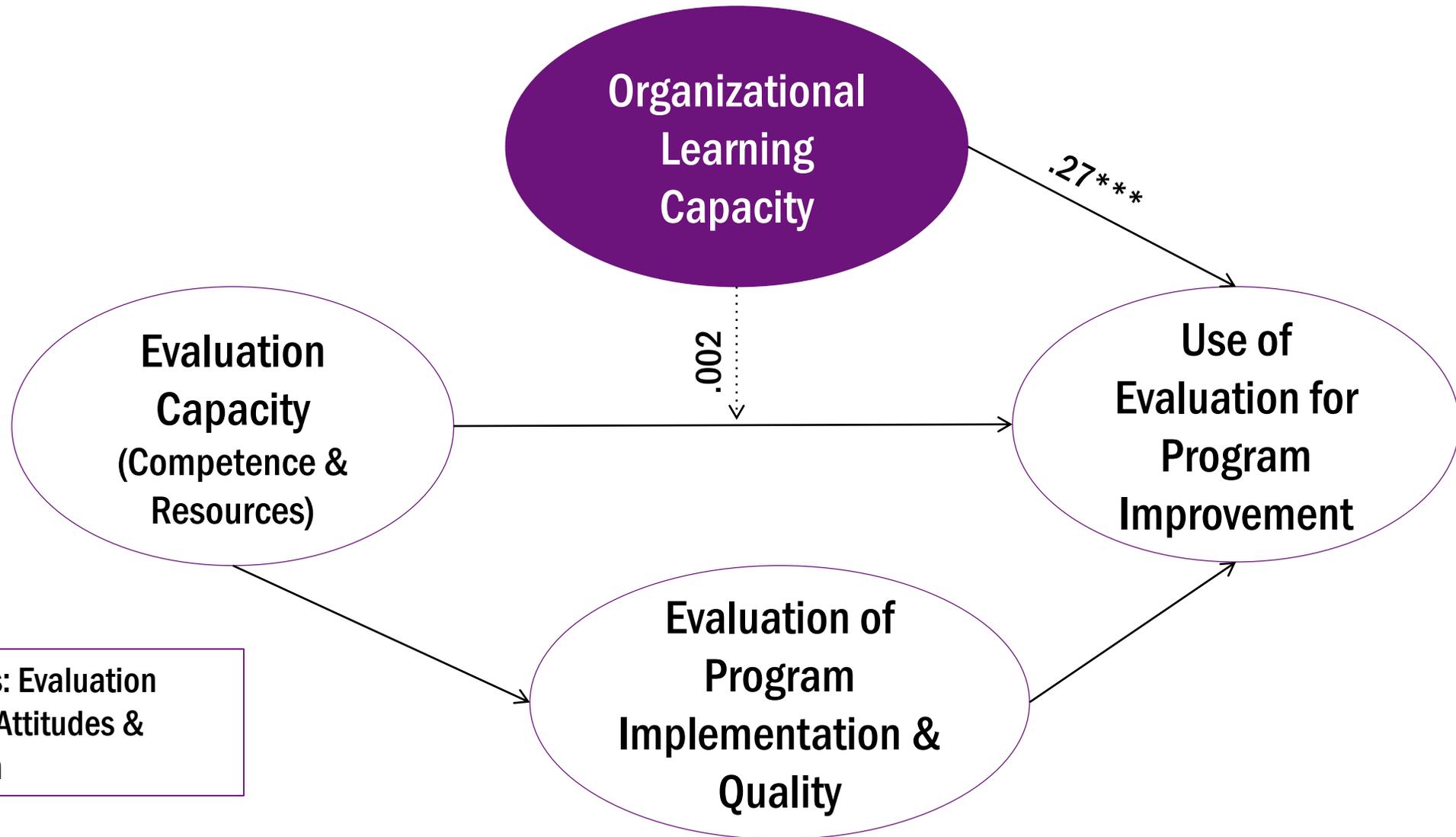


Test of the Conceptual Model

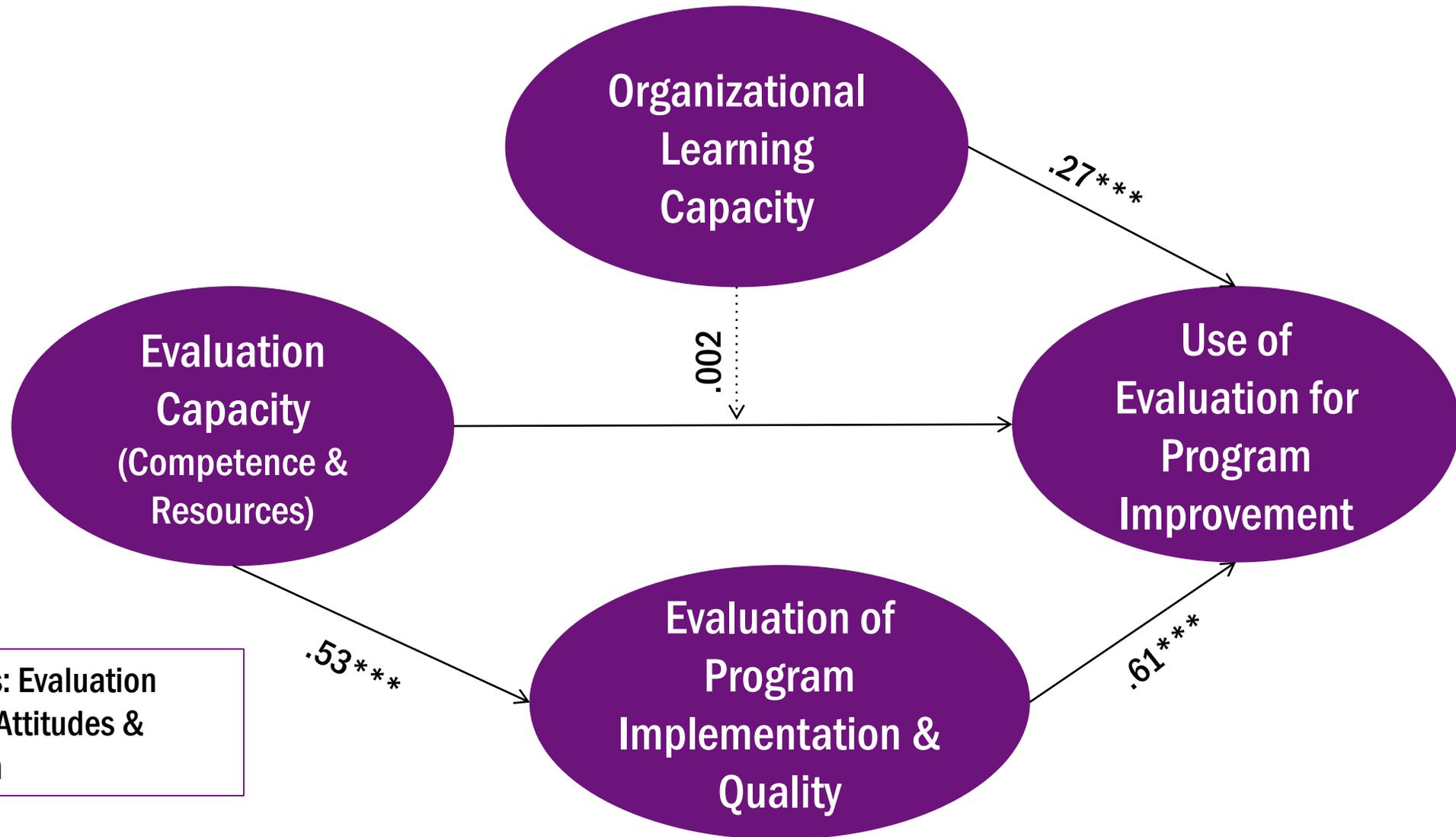
✓ H2: evaluation of program implementation and quality mediates the relationship between evaluation capacity and use of evaluation for program improvement.



Test of the Conceptual Model



Final Model



Covariates: Evaluation Capacity- Attitudes & Motivation

Next Steps for Research

- Replication replication!
- Longitudinal Studies
- Case studies of capacity building that focus on building capacity for use

Implications for Practice

- Building OLC requires an expanded set of evaluator competencies
- Assessing OLC is a great starting point for evaluator-program partnerships

Thank you!

Please get in touch for more information on these studies:

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Silvana McCormick, PhD silvana@redwoodconsulting.org



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