

INTERAGENCY WORKING GROUP **ON** youth PROGRAMS

*Program Evaluation Doesn't Have to be Scary:
Increase Buy-In with Message Framing*

Thursday, March 22, 2018

HOSTED BY

INTERAGENCY
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ON
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Corporation for
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SERVICE



USDA



PRESENTERS



Xan Young, MPH
Senior TA Consultant
American Institutes for Research



Michael Baran, PhD
Principal Researcher
American Institutes for Research

AGENDA

- Program evaluation basics
- Understanding culture's role in strategic message framing
- Barriers to communicating about program evaluation
- Framing strategies to increase buy-in



PROGRAM EVALUATION BASICS

QUESTION

What first comes to mind when you think about program evaluation?

(Write your answer in the "Submit Questions Here" box.)

DEFINITION OF PROGRAM EVALUATION

A systematic study using research methods to collect and analyze data to assess how well a program is working and why

TYPES OF QUESTIONS EVALUATION CAN ANSWER

Has the program attained its *implementation* objectives?

- Are you implementing the services or training that you initially planned to implement?
- Are you reaching the intended population?
- Are you reaching the intended number of participants?
- Are you developing the intended collaborative relationships?

Has the program attained its *outcome* objectives?

- Are participants exhibiting the expected changes in knowledge, attitudes, behaviors, or awareness?
- Can these changes be attributed to the program?

TYPES OF QUESTIONS EVALUATION CAN ANSWER

- **Implementation**

Were your program's activities put into place as originally intended?

- **Effectiveness**

Is your program achieving the goals and objectives it was intended to accomplish?

- **Attribution**

Can progress on goals and objectives be shown to be related to your program, as opposed to other things that are going on at the same time?

- **Efficiency**

Are your program's activities being produced with an appropriate use of resources such as budget and staff time?

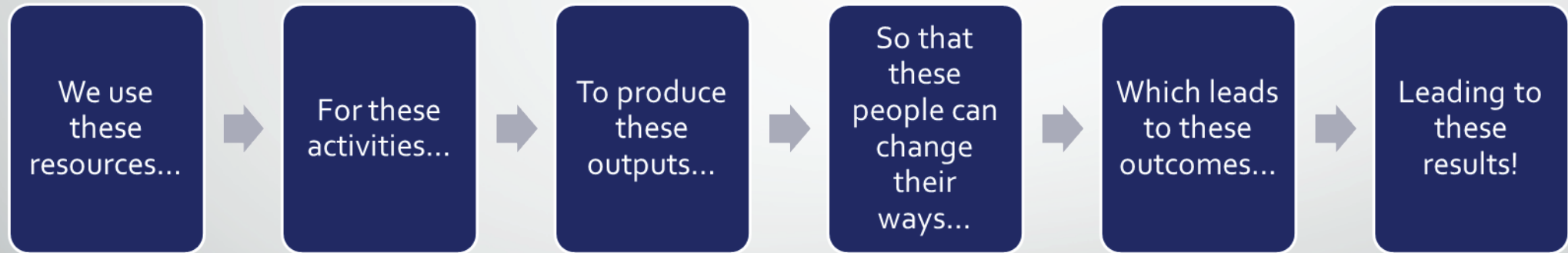
- **Cost-Effectiveness**

Does the value or benefit of achieving your program's goals and objectives exceed the cost of producing them?

LOGIC MODEL

- A logic model is a useful tool for program planning and evaluation.
- It visually describes how a program should work, presents the planned activities for the program, describes how activities will be documented, and focuses on anticipated outcomes.
- It often uses diagrams or pictures that illustrate the logical relationship among key program elements through a sequence of "if-then" statements.

KEY ELEMENTS OF A LOGIC MODEL



SAMPLE LOGIC MODEL

Goal: To reduce the prevalence of STDs among men in City X

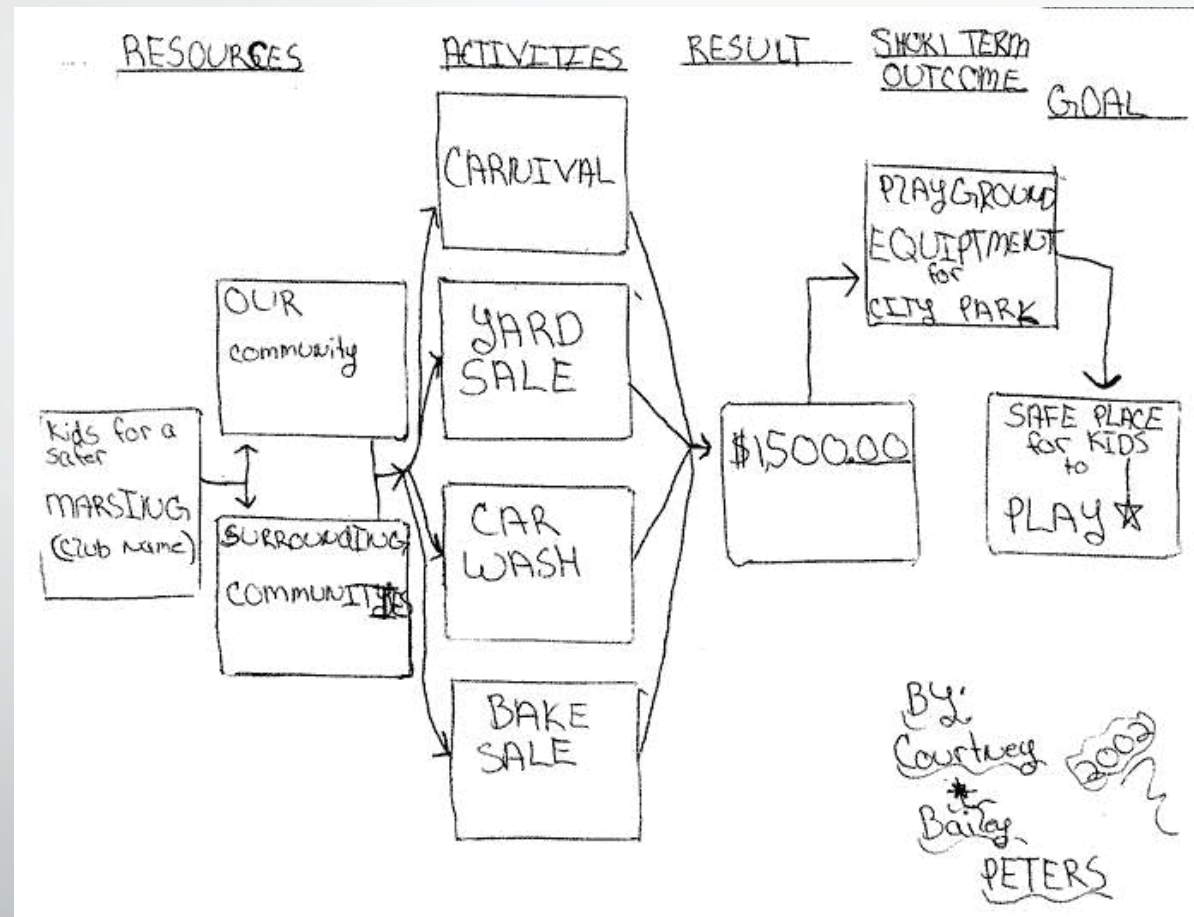
Process objective: By (month/year), staff will conduct three professional development workshops on STD screening recommendations for clinical providers caring for men in City X.

Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Short-Term Outcome	Intermediate Outcome	Long-Term Outcome
Funding Staff time Screening guidelines Workshop curriculum Meeting space	Conduct workshop on STD guidelines for clinical providers caring for men	Workshop on STD guidelines for clinical providers caring for men	Increased knowledge of STD guidelines among clinical providers attending the workshop	Increased routine screening for STDs in men by clinical providers attending the workshop	Decreased prevalence of STDs among men

SAMPLE LOGIC MODEL

A Safe Place for Kids to Play

A logic model developed by Courtney and Bailey Peters when they were 9 and 11 years old



Source: Work Group for Community Health and Development. (2013). *Community tool box*. Retrieved from <https://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/overview/models-for-community-health-and-development/logic-model-development/example>



CULTURE'S ROLE IN STRATEGIC MESSAGE FRAMING

COMMON REACTIONS TO EVALUATION

It's too complex!

It's too expensive!

It's too time-consuming!

I don't have enough staff.

I can just tack it on in the end.

My resources are better used providing activities.

It will make me look bad!

WE NEED MORE EFFECTIVE MESSAGES!

- We need to better understand what's underlying the common reactions (cultural models).
- We need to be strategic about triggering or avoiding those cultural models to increase buy-in.

Source: Work Group for Community Health and Development. (2013). *Community tool box*. Retrieved from <http://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/overview/models-for-community-health-and-development/logic-model-development/main>

MISSED MESSAGE EXAMPLE 1

- **Expert Message:**

“Prison only makes a youth offender more likely to commit future crime. Prison doesn’t do any good for youth who engaged in minor crimes.”

- **General response:**

“Yes, prison is too cushy, like a holiday camp! We need to take away prisoner activities and make prison more harsh so that they never want to come back.”

MISSED MESSAGE EXAMPLE 2

- **Expert Message:**
“Stress is harmful for young children’s cognitive development.”
- **General response:**
“I experienced stress and it made me stronger.”

EXPLANATIONS FOR MISSED MESSAGES

- Message was too complicated.
- Message was poorly distributed.
- Message was not memorable or attention grabbing.
- Message did not trigger strong emotion.
- Message did not contain facts (or contrasted facts with myths).
- People misunderstood the message.

Another possibility...

- Culture gets in the way!

CULTURAL MODELS IN MIND



- From 0-3, the brain develops 700 synaptic connections per second.
- Cultural models are implicit patterns of thinking widely shared in a given population.
- They help us organize the vast, complicated stimuli of life into a shared common sense.

HOW DO CULTURAL MODELS AFFECT COMMUNICATION?



- The way that messages are framed (values, metaphors, key words, messenger, tone, etc.) cues cultural models.
- Those cultural models then determine how a person understands the message.
- Unlike what a “code” model would predict, miscommunication is the norm.

Source: Shonkoff, J., & Bales, S. (2011). Science does not speak for itself: Translating child development research for the public and its policymakers. *Child Development*, 82(1), 17–32.

HOW DO WE GATHER EVIDENCE FOR A COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY?

Phase 1: Formative Research

- Conducting in-depth interviews that ask the most basic questions
- Analyzing implicit “common sense” understandings
- Mapping the cultural models in the space

Phase 2: Message Testing

- Developing messages to target productive understandings and avoid problematic ones
- Testing hypotheses with a mix of qualitative and quantitative methods

REFRAMED MESSAGE EXAMPLE 1

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- **Cultural models:**

retribution, rational actor

- **Reframe with:**

“Prisons sweep young people into a powerful stream of crime from which it is difficult to escape.”

REFRAMED MESSAGE EXAMPLE 2

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MISSED MESSAGES EXAMPLE 2

- **Expert Message:**
“Stress is harmful for young children’s cognitive development.”
- **General response:**
“I experienced stress and it made me stronger.”
- **Cultural models:**
individualism, resilience = willpower
- **Reframe with:**
A taxonomy of normal stress, tolerable stress, and toxic stress.



BARRIERS TO COMMUNICATING ABOUT PROGRAM EVALUATION

CULTURAL MODEL: JUST DO IT

- Lack of understanding about implementation as a science or practice.
- Common sense tells you it will work, so why evaluate?
- If it worked somewhere, it will work here.
- Outcomes are straightforward.

CULTURAL MODEL: EVALUATION STARTS AFTER IMPLEMENTATION IS COMPLETED

- Evaluation is just for the end of a project – to show if it “worked.”
- Obscures that evaluation throughout can show you WHY implementation is working or not, and allow you to adjust as you go.
- Makes it hard to understand planning – how implementation and evaluation planning have to happen simultaneously.

CULTURAL MODEL: SHORT-TERM THINKING

- Evaluation is to measure what happened at the end of this single program.
- If the evaluation doesn't capture why the program worked or didn't work, it misses the chance to improve not only this program, but future programs and the field at large.

CULTURAL MODEL: MORE = BETTER

- Delivering more services and reaching more people can be valued higher and can be more salient than the quality of the program or the outcomes.
- As such, people think that evaluation takes away staff, resources, and time from what really matters.

CULTURAL MODEL: OVERWHELMING COMPLEXITY

- Implementers may think, “how do you evaluate a program when you understand the overwhelming complexity of implementing it in the real world?”
- Implementers struggle to balance fidelity with adaptability to context.

CULTURAL MODEL: JUDGING THE PROGRAM AND THE IMPLEMENTERS

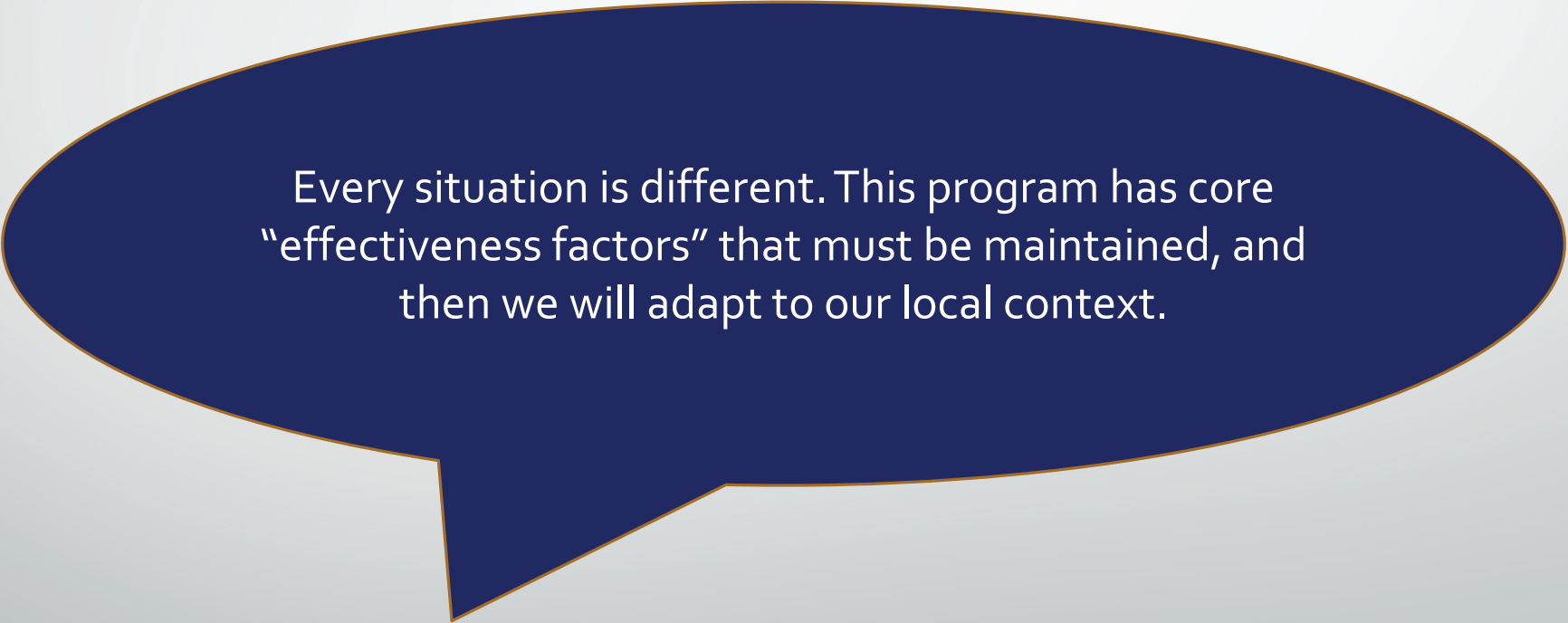
- Implementation in the real world is complex, and if the program does not achieve the ideal expected results, implementers are to blame.
- Makes people hesitant to evaluate because it will make them look bad and will make them look like they are wasting resources.
- Causes fear that the program will be deemed ineffective and defunded.



FRAMING STRATEGIES TO INCREASE BUY-IN

REFRAMING THE CONVERSATION

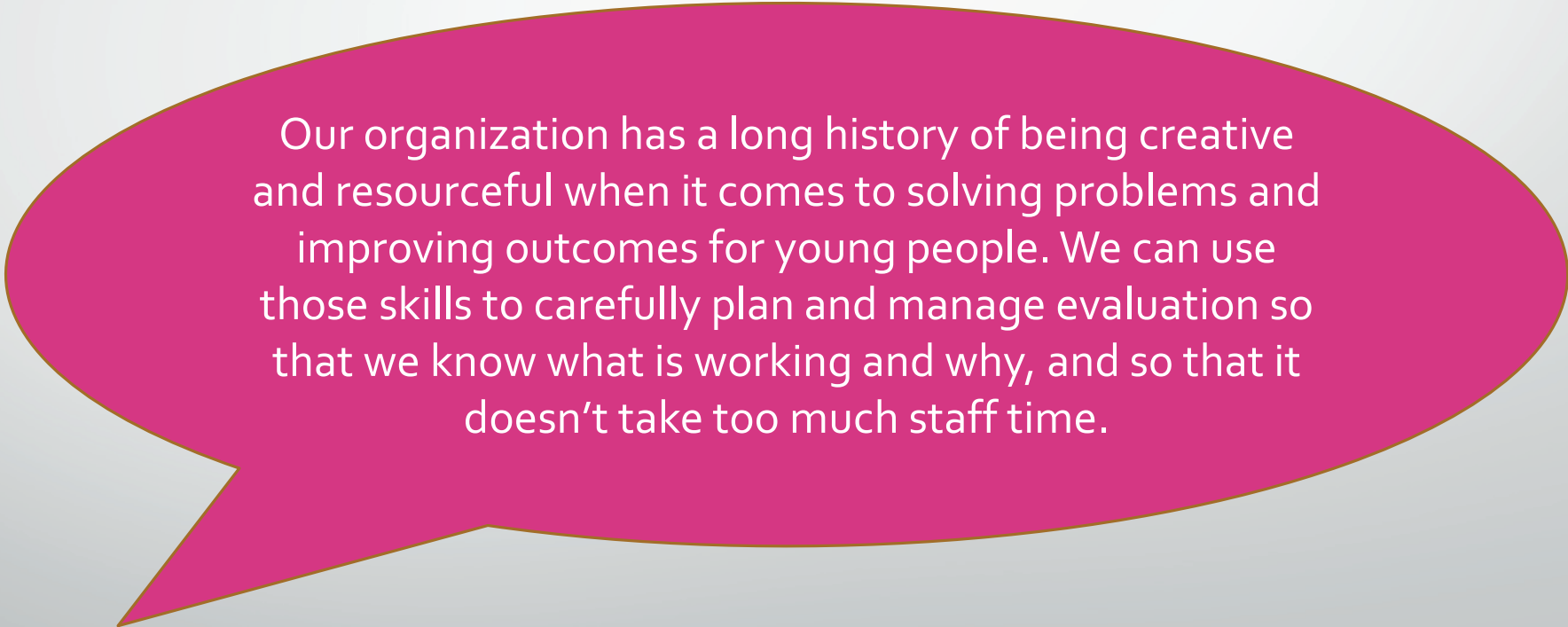
1. Clarify *fidelity* versus *adaptation* to increase understanding of implementation.



Every situation is different. This program has core “effectiveness factors” that must be maintained, and then we will adapt to our local context.

REFRAMING THE CONVERSATION

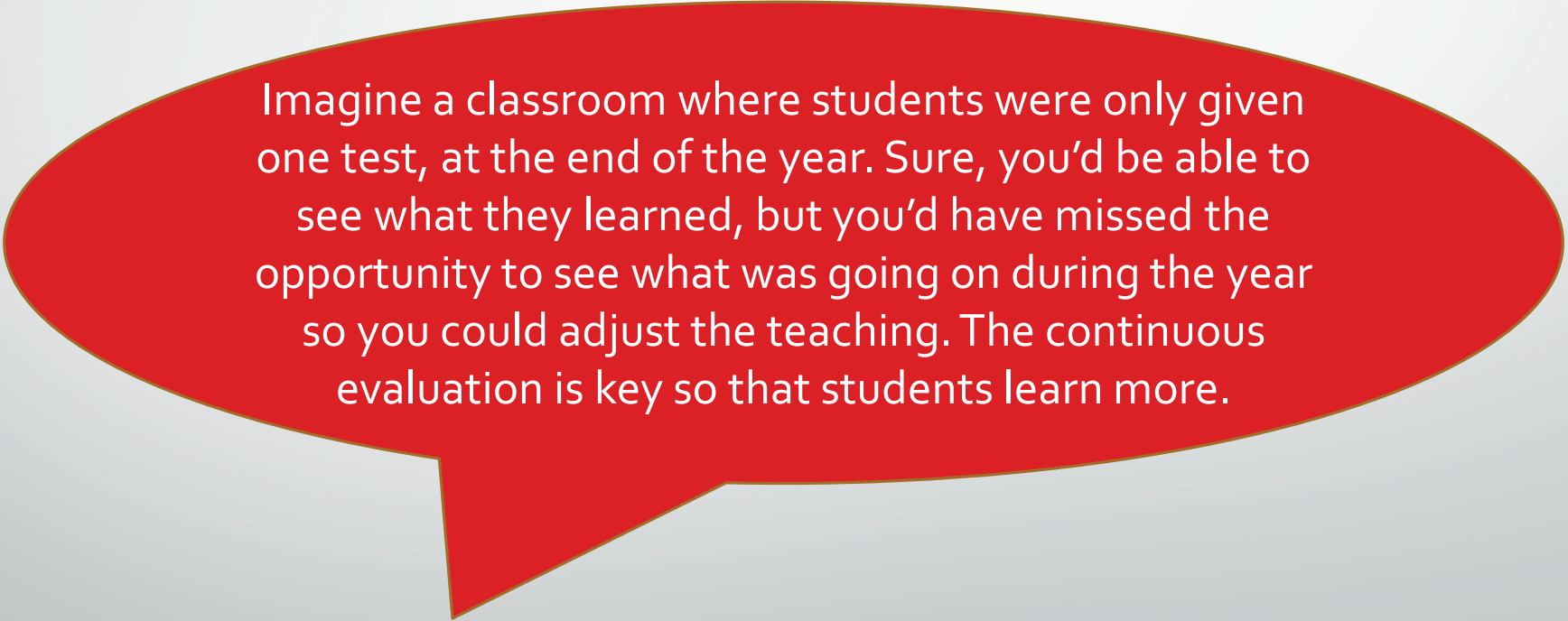
2. Use the values of *Ingenuity* and *Responsible Management* to avoid the overwhelming complexity cultural model.



Our organization has a long history of being creative and resourceful when it comes to solving problems and improving outcomes for young people. We can use those skills to carefully plan and manage evaluation so that we know what is working and why, and so that it doesn't take too much staff time.

REFRAMING THE CONVERSATION

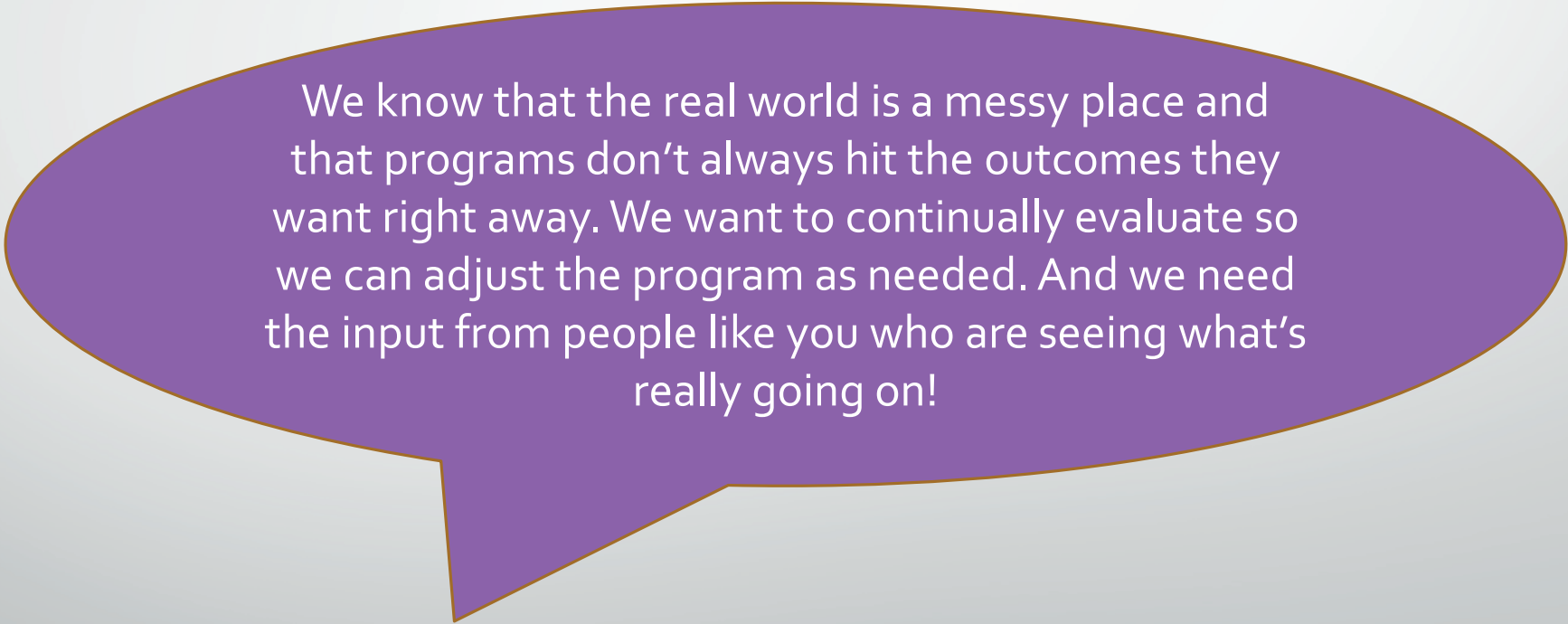
3. Use an *explanatory metaphor* to show why evaluation shouldn't just happen at the end.



Imagine a classroom where students were only given one test, at the end of the year. Sure, you'd be able to see what they learned, but you'd have missed the opportunity to see what was going on during the year so you could adjust the teaching. The continuous evaluation is key so that students learn more.

REFRAMING THE CONVERSATION

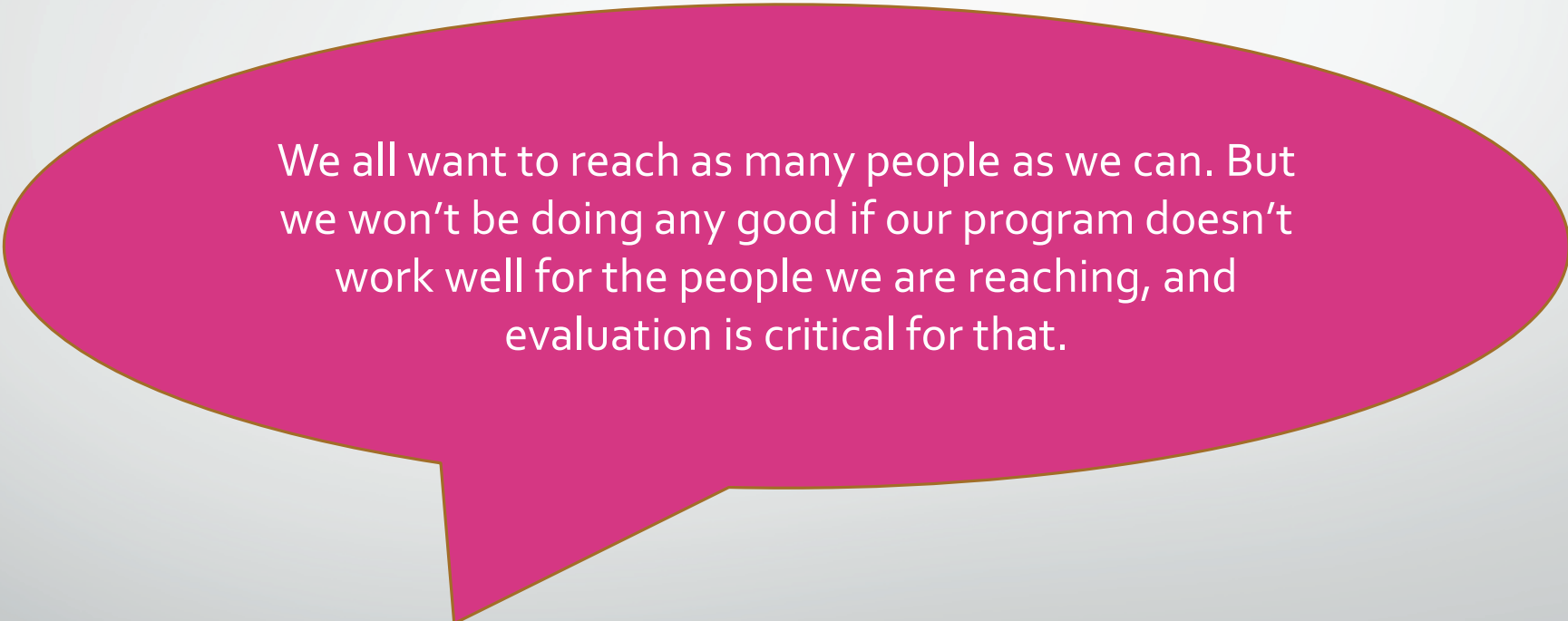
4. *Validate* and *empower* implementers so they don't feel like they are being judged.



We know that the real world is a messy place and that programs don't always hit the outcomes they want right away. We want to continually evaluate so we can adjust the program as needed. And we need the input from people like you who are seeing what's really going on!

REFRAMING THE CONVERSATION

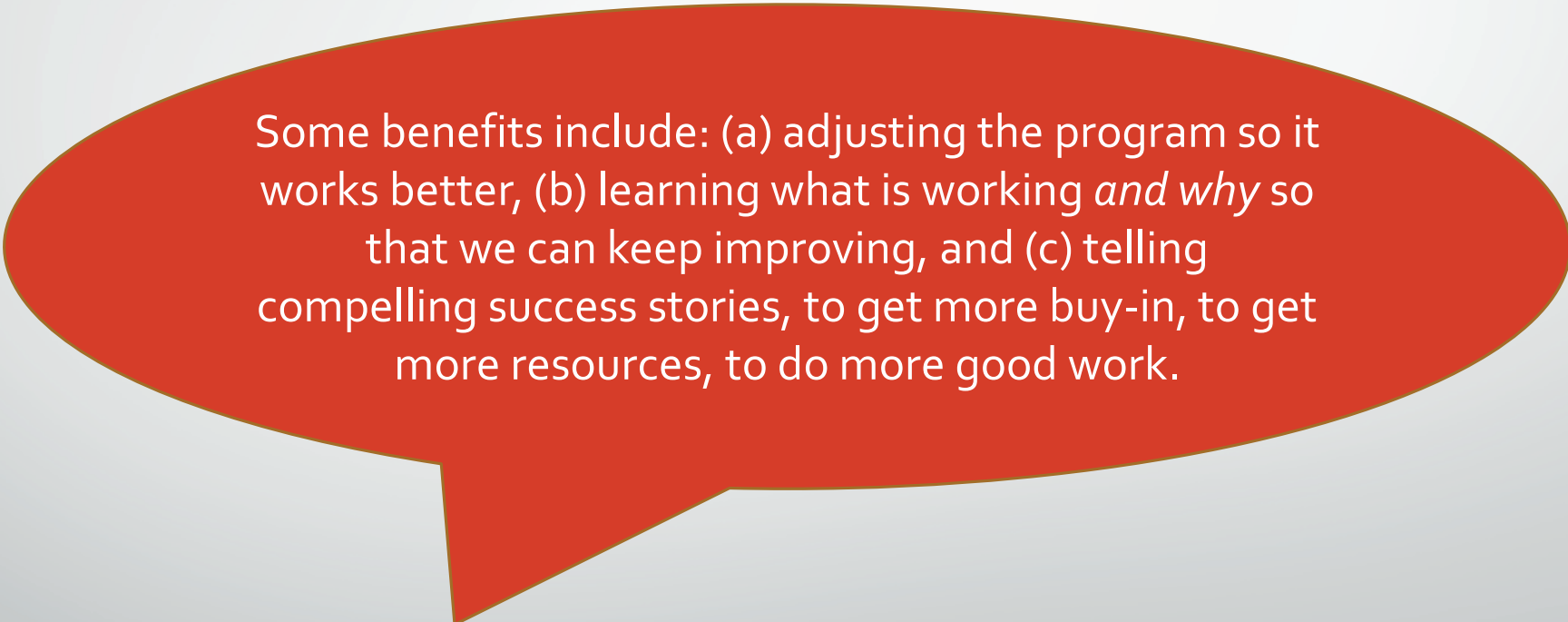
5. Focus attention on *quality* rather than quantity.



We all want to reach as many people as we can. But we won't be doing any good if our program doesn't work well for the people we are reaching, and evaluation is critical for that.

REFRAMING THE CONVERSATION

6. Link the *benefits* of evaluation to your mission.



Some benefits include: (a) adjusting the program so it works better, (b) learning what is working *and why* so that we can keep improving, and (c) telling compelling success stories, to get more buy-in, to get more resources, to do more good work.

QUESTIONS?

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Xan Young, MPH
Senior TA Consultant
American Institutes for Research

202-403-5290
xyoung@air.org

Michael Baran, PhD
Principal Researcher
American Institutes for Research

301-592-3354
mbaran@air.org