



Theory of Change and Evidence

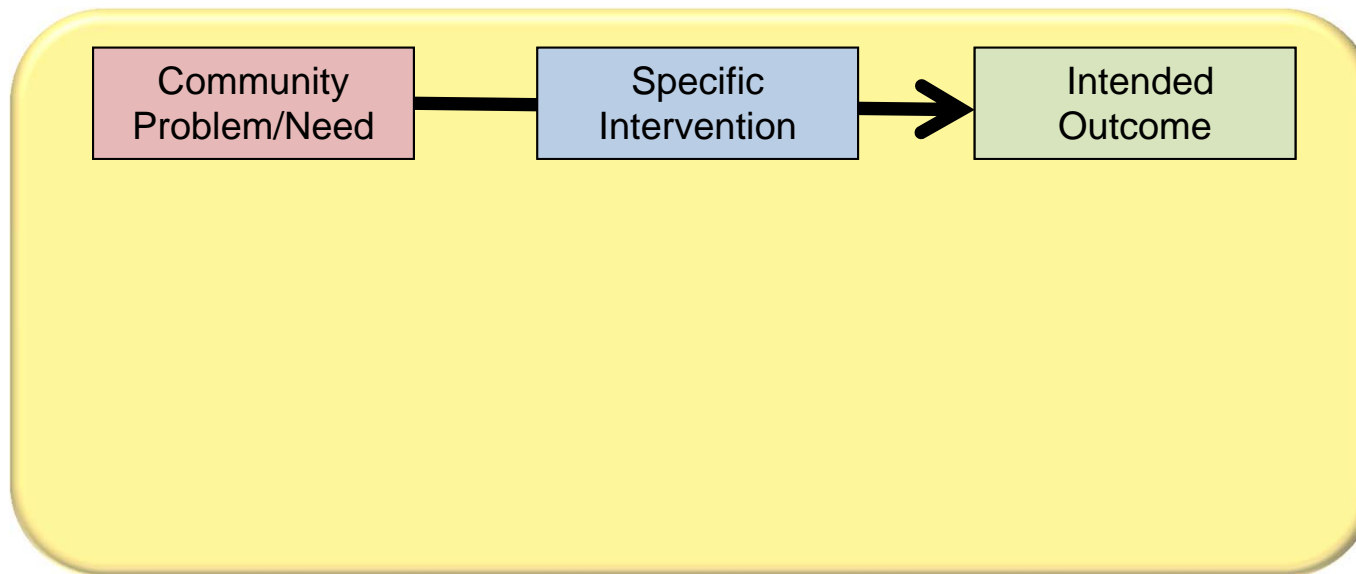


Learning Objectives

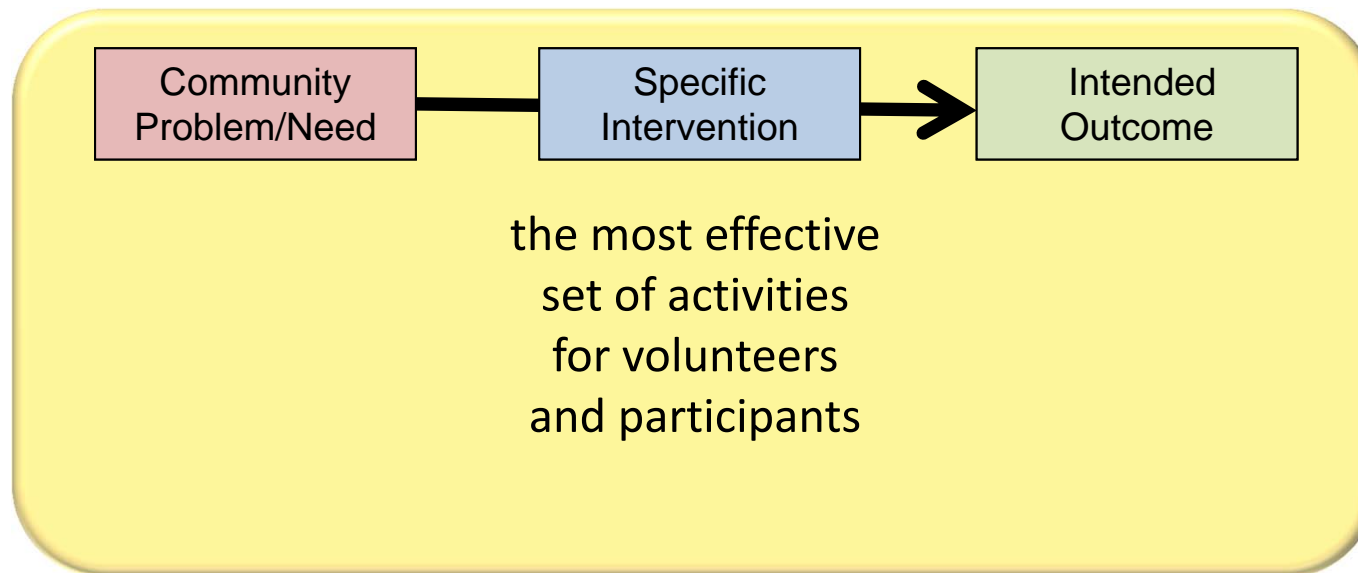


- Know the elements of theory of change
- Understand how theory of change informs program design
- Know the difference between data that documents the community problem/need and evidence that supports the intervention
- Understand different types of evidence and their strengths

Theory of Change Elements

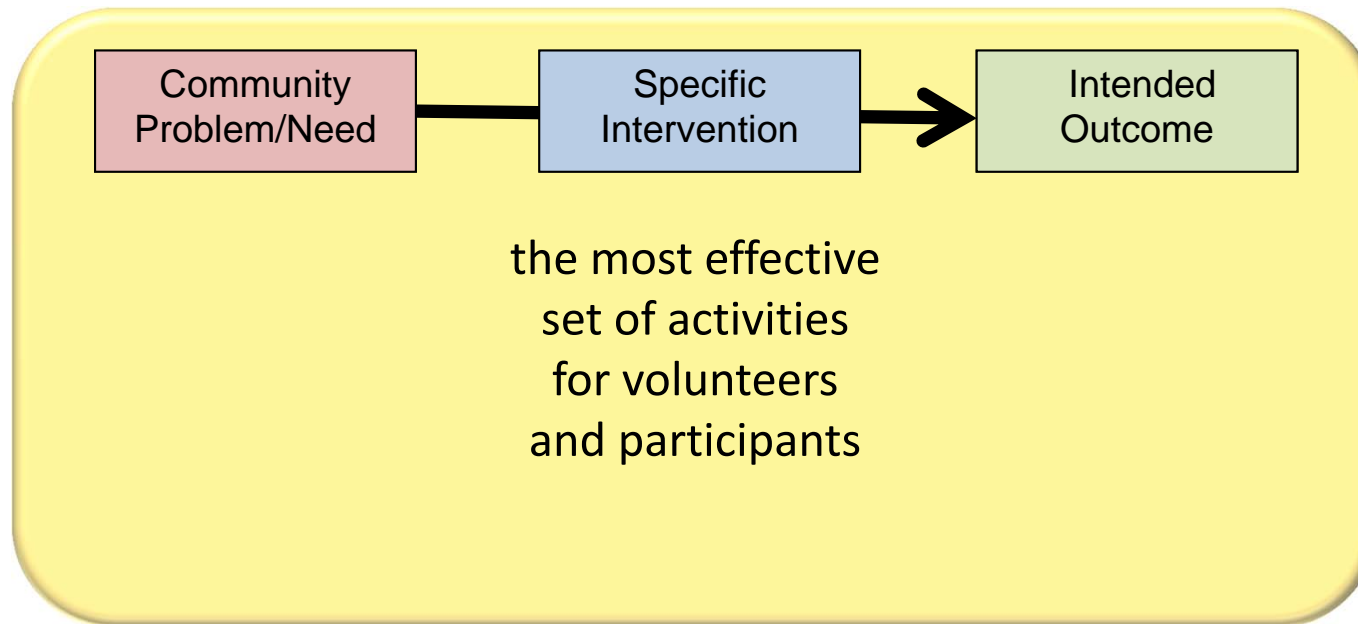


Theory of Change Perspective



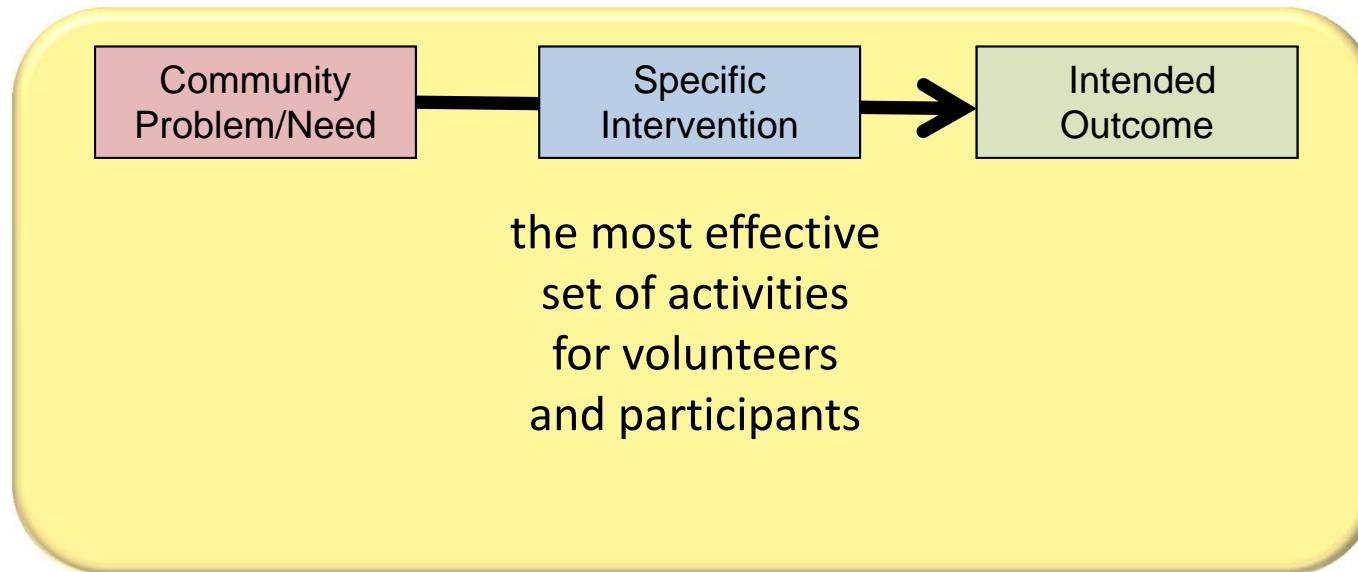
- Looks at cause and effect relationships

Theory of Change Perspective



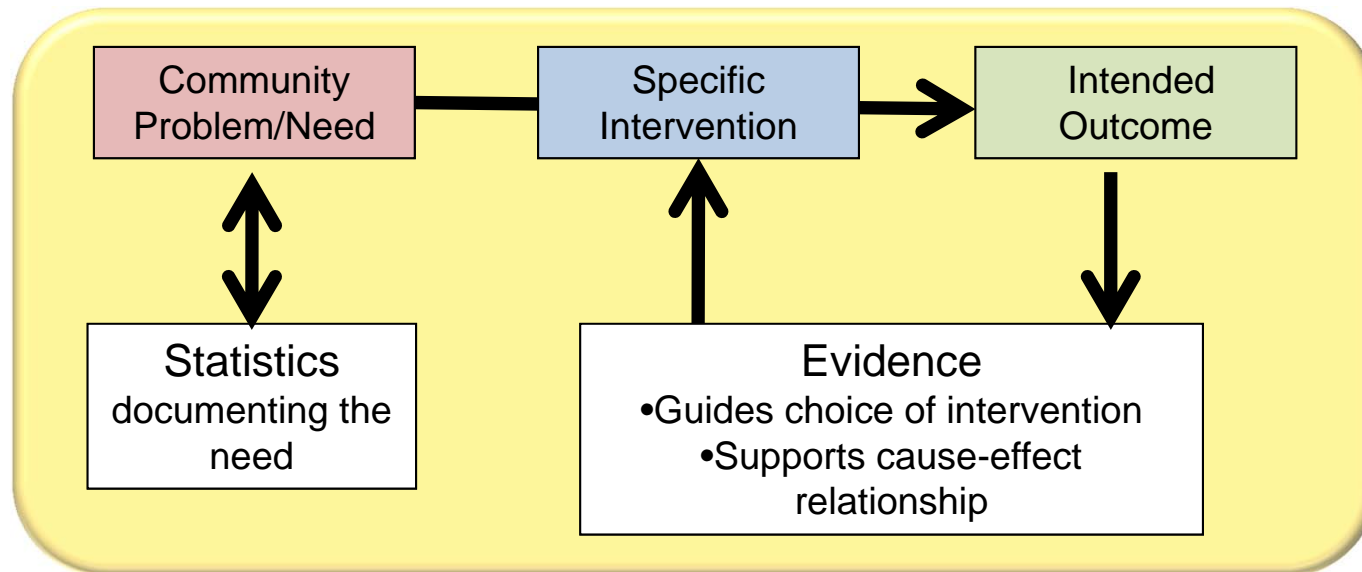
- Identifies specific interventions to achieve the desired result

Theory of Change Perspective

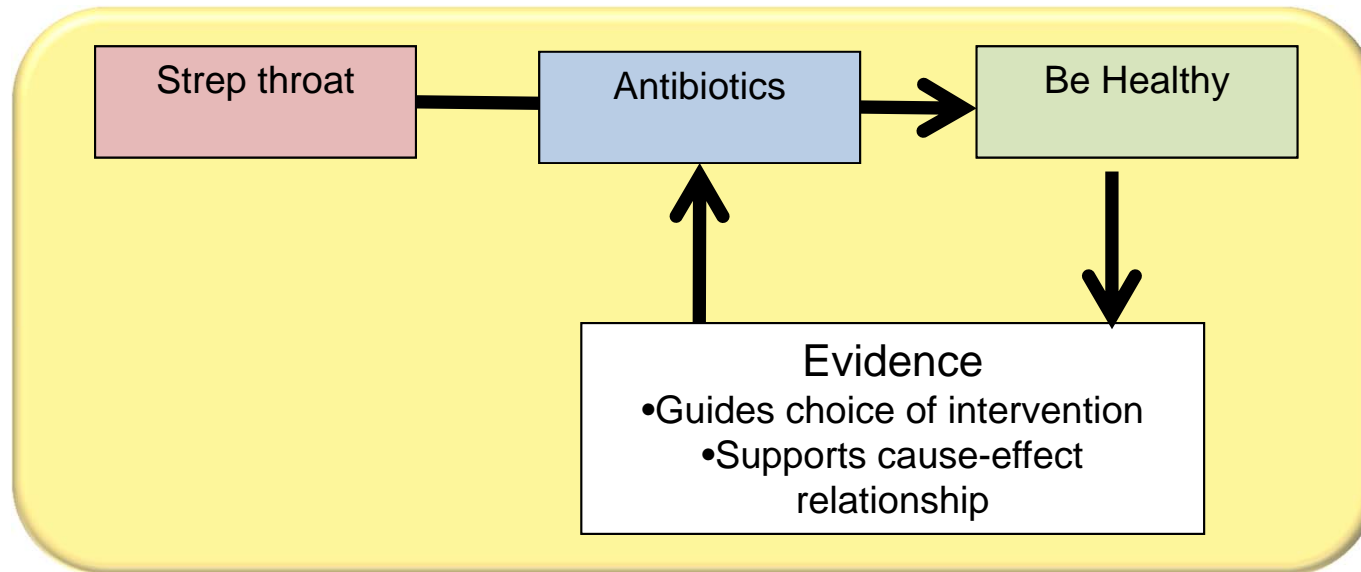


- Shifts thinking from “*what we are doing*” to focus on “*what we want to achieve*”

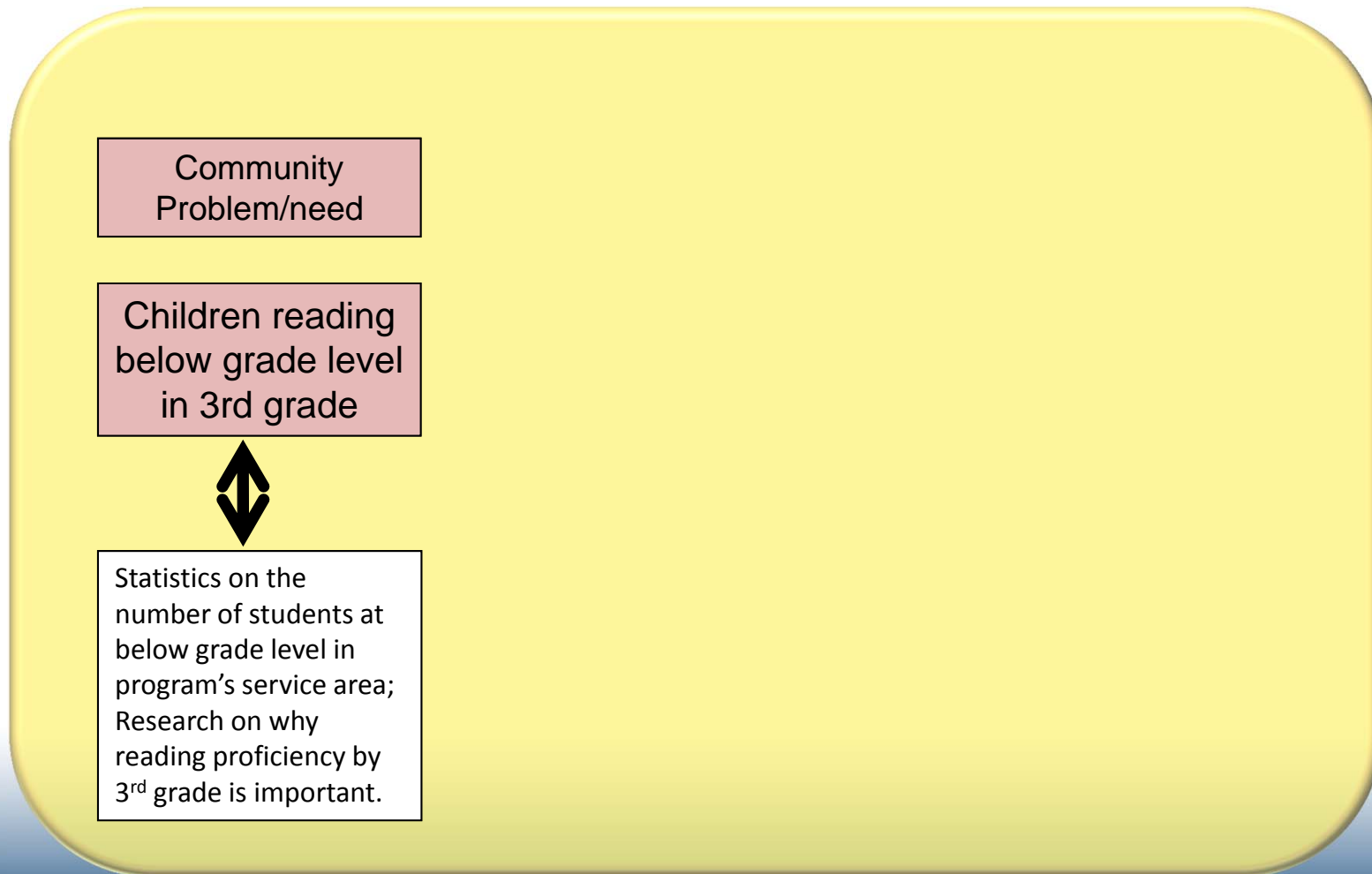
Theory of Change Elements



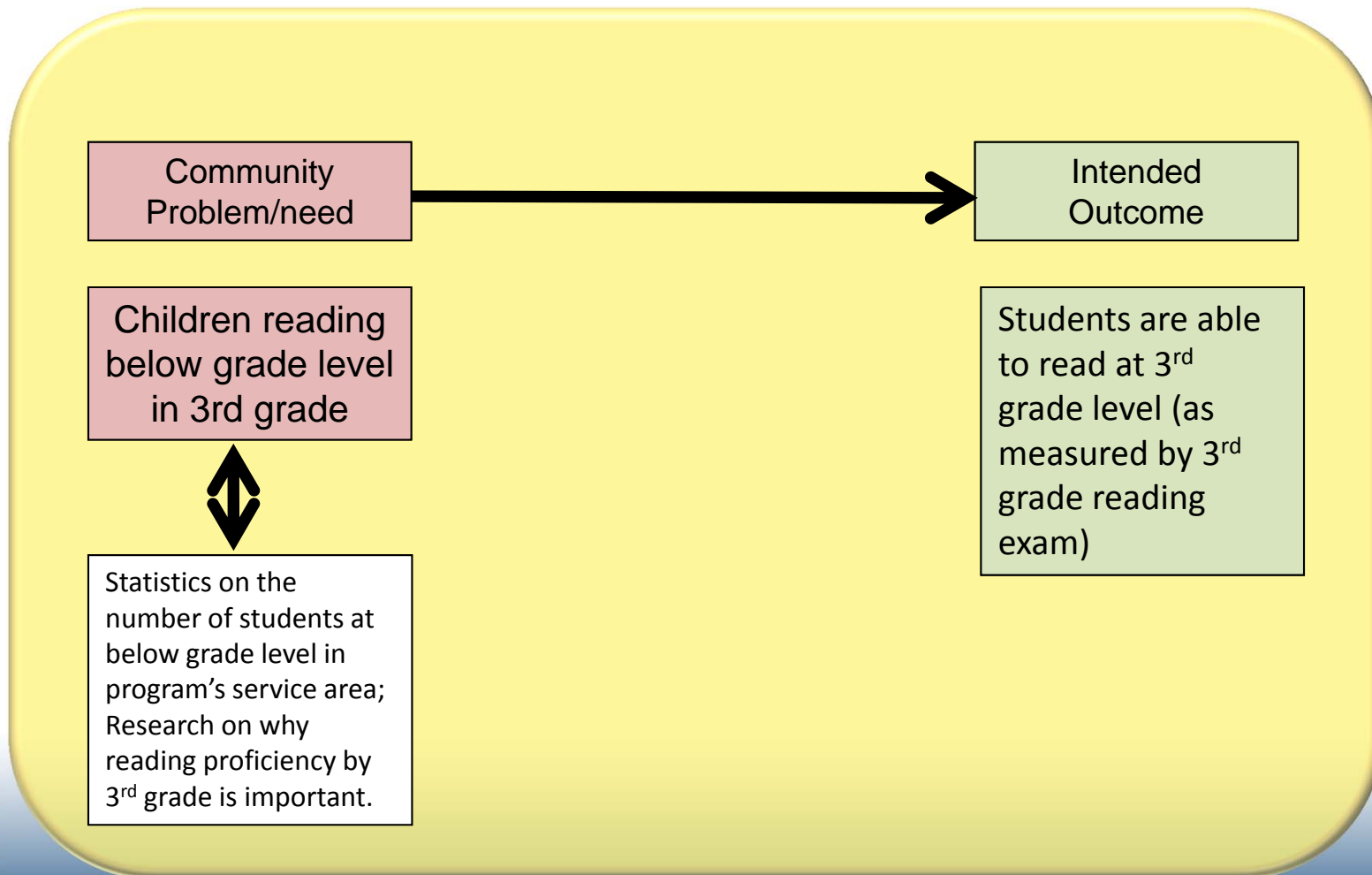
Everyday Life Example



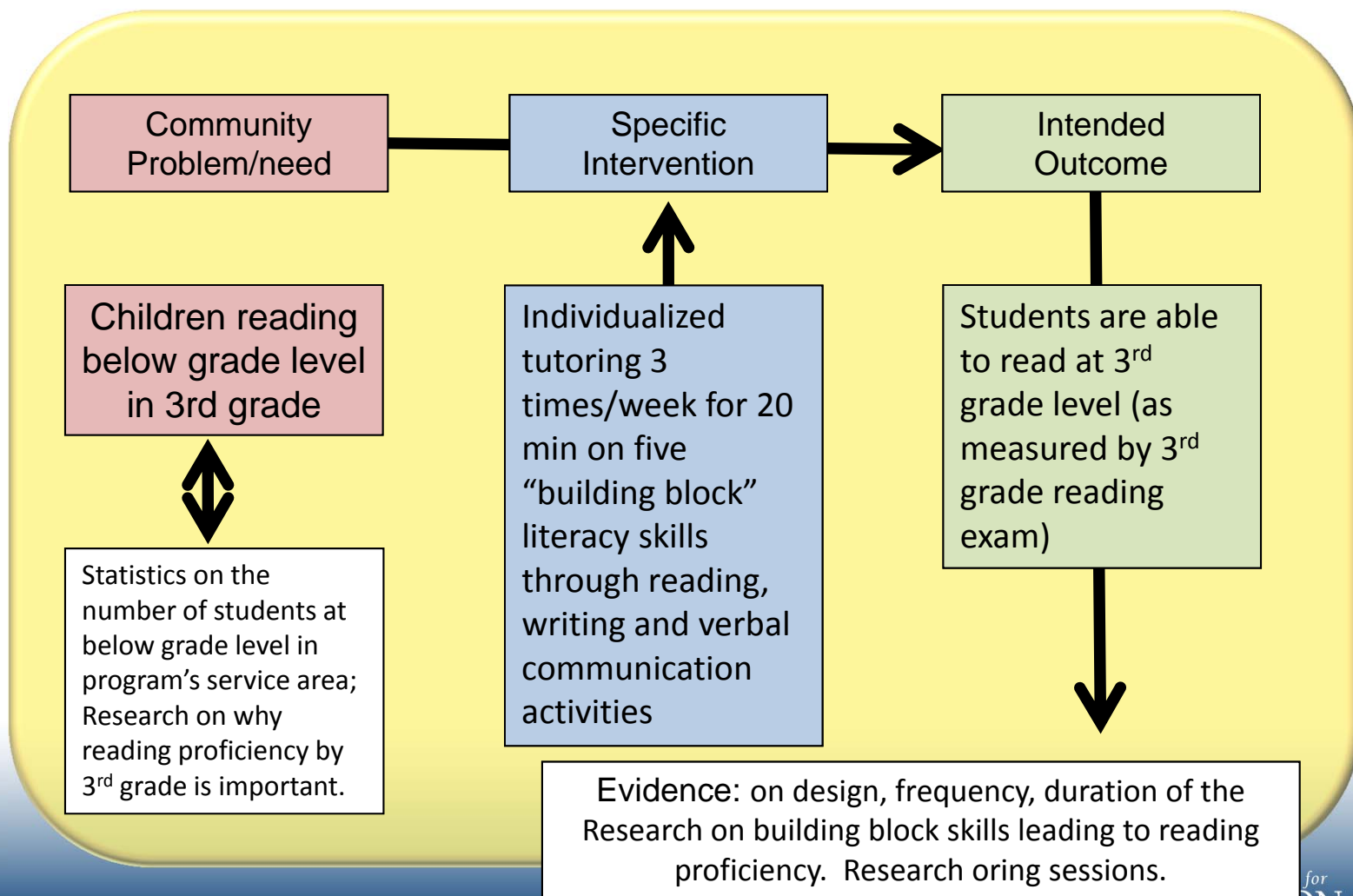
Example: Riverton Literacy Corps



Example: Riverton Literacy Corps

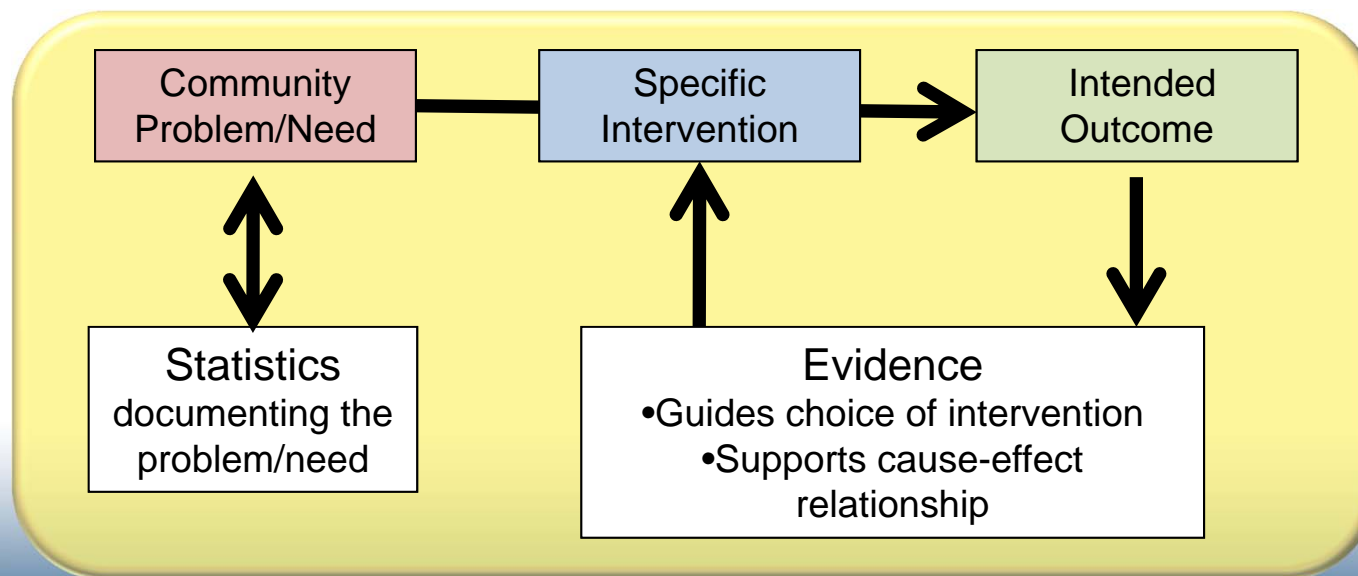


Example: Riverton Literacy Corps



Theory of Change Elements

- **Community Problem:** The negative condition that exists in the community
- **Community Need:** The prevalence and severity of the problem



Community Problem/Need

Statistics or data documenting prevalence and severity of the problem should answer these questions:

- **SCOPE:** Who and how many are directly affected? How severe is this?
- **SIGNIFICANCE:** What makes this a compelling need? Is it likely to become worse? What will happen if we do nothing?
- **CAUSE(S):** Why does the need exist? How is it perpetuated?

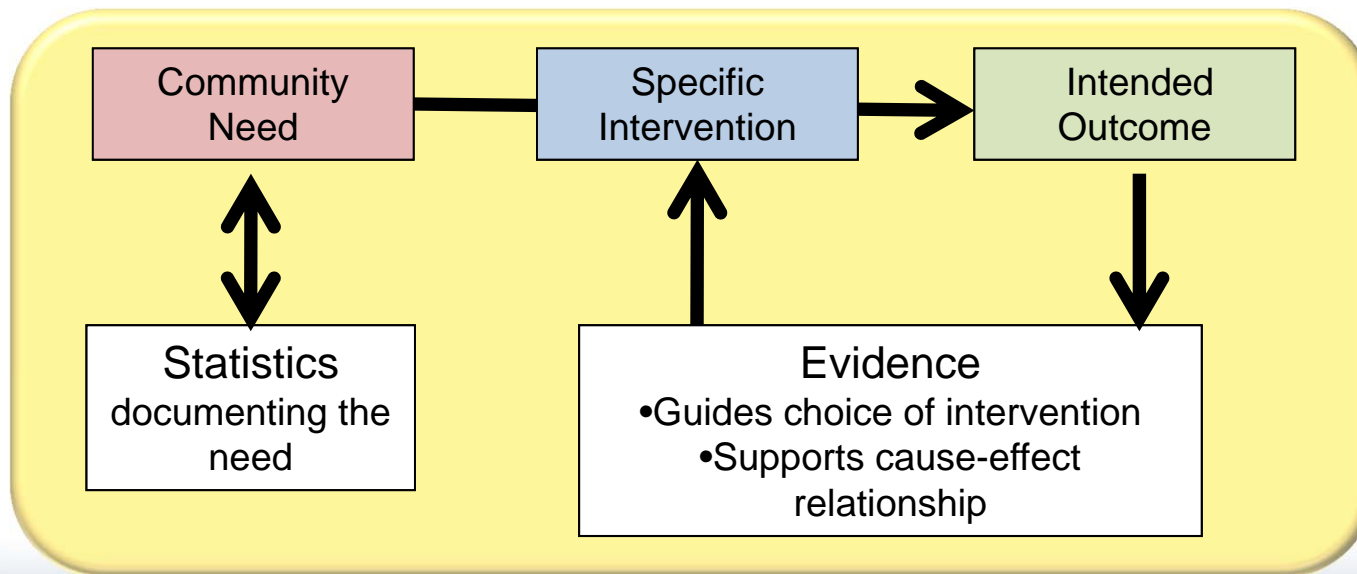
Documenting Community Need

Healthy Futures Program Example

- **Scope:** National Survey of Children and Health found childhood obesity in State X increased 23% between 2003 and 2007 – the 2nd fastest rate of increase in US (2010). CDC data show nearly one-third of children and teens are obese or overweight in Webb County (2009).
- **Significance:**
 - Obese children found to become obese adults
 - Links between childhood obesity and early onset of cardiovascular disease, and Type II diabetes
 - Webb County rising in state and national averages for cardiovascular disease
 - Long term health care costs rising
- **Causes:** Diet, sedentary lifestyle

Intended Outcome

- What change are you hoping to make related to the identified problem?



Identifying the Intended Outcome

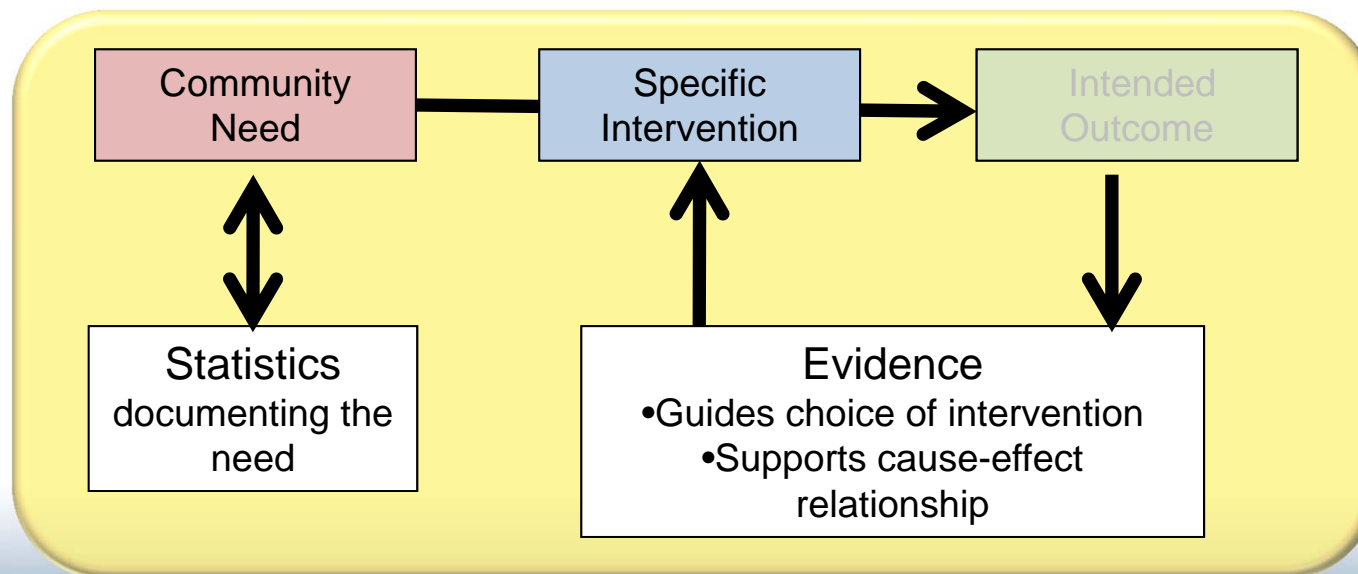
Healthy Futures Program Example

- Possible outcomes to measure:
 - Increased knowledge of what is “healthy food”
 - More frequent choice of healthy foods to eat
 - More frequent involvement in physical activity or exercise
 - Improved physical condition



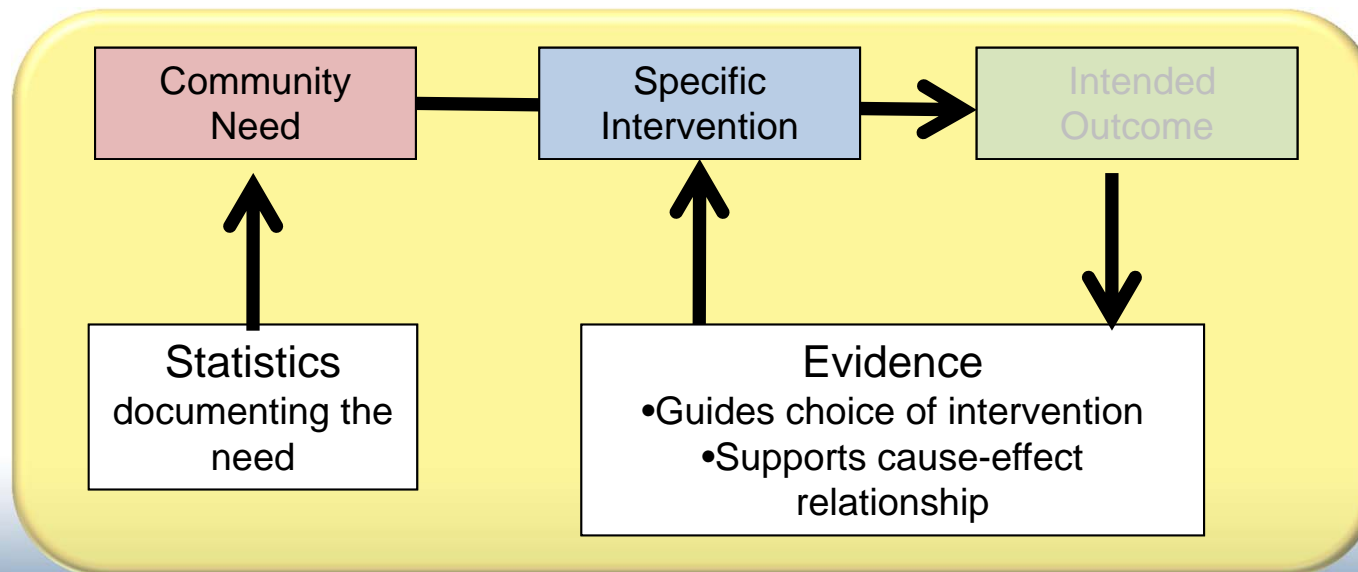
Intervention

- An intervention is the specific set of activities in which participants and volunteers will be engaged. What is the best way to achieve the intended outcome?



Intervention

- An intervention is the specific set of activities in which participants and volunteers will be engaged. What is the best way to achieve the intended outcome?



Intervention

Describe the design and dosage of your intervention (service activity):

- **Design** (Specifics of the intervention)
- **Dosage**
 - **Frequency** (How many sessions a week?)
 - **Intensity** (Length of each session)
 - **Duration** (How many total weeks, sessions or months?)

Intervention Example

Healthy Futures Program Example

- **Design:** national service participants implement the Shape Up curriculum with economically disadvantaged urban girls ages 14-16 to increase physical activity (30 minutes/session) and educate them on healthy eating
- **Frequency:** twice a week afterschool
- **Intensity:** 60 minutes per session
- **Duration:** 12 weeks



Testing Your Theory of Change

- Is the intervention designed to solve the problem?
- Is the intervention likely to lead to the outcomes?
- Are the intended outcomes meaningful/important?
- Is the magnitude of the change worth the effort?

Practice Activity



Evidence

EVIDENCE: Information or facts that are systematically obtained in a manner that is replicable, observable, credible and verifiable for use in making judgments or decisions. Evidence enables us to determine whether or not a program is achieving its intended outcomes.

• <http://vetoviolence.cdc.gov/evidence/faqs.aspx>



How Evidence Informs Program Design

New Programs:

- What existing interventions have demonstrated success in solving the problem?
- Where have existing interventions fallen short?
- What is the recommended design (specific program activities) and dosage (frequency, intensity, and duration) to achieve an intended outcome?

Evidence-Informed



Program design is based on or adapted from a similar program that has evidence from an evaluation

How Evidence Informs Program Implementation

Existing Programs:

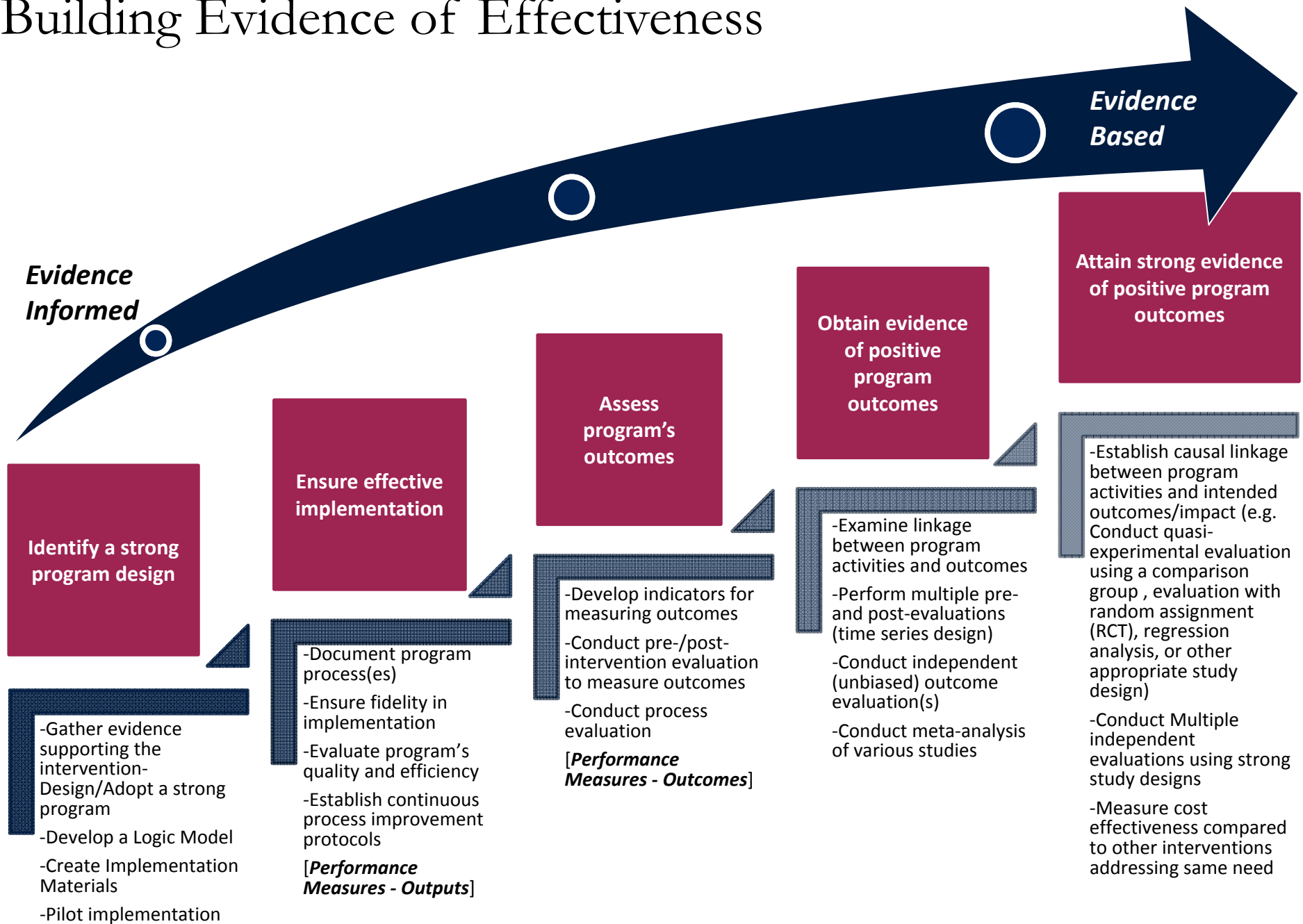
- Is there sufficient evidence for the intervention to continue its use?
- Based on the evidence, are there modifications to the intervention that would make it more effective?
- Do you need to choose a new intervention?

Evidence-Based



- Program designs where evaluation has established a causal linkage between program activities and intended outcomes

Building Evidence of Effectiveness



Evidence Basis for Interventions

Possible sources of evidence include:

- Evaluations that document the outcomes of similar programs
- Performance measurement outcome data
- Results from an evaluation of your program outcomes

Evidence Source: Evaluations from Other Organizations

- Have similar programs been successful in achieving the outcomes you want your program to produce?

Evidence Source: Your Performance Measurement Data

Past performance measurement outcome data:

- What do your past performance measurement results tell you?
- Can you show positive outcomes over time?



Evidence Source: Your Program Evaluation

Results from an evaluation of your program outcomes:

- What type of evaluation is it?
- Does it document change in knowledge, attitude, behavior or condition of beneficiaries?
- Does it show that your intervention is what caused the change?



Assessing Evidence

Considerations:

- **Similar:** Cites comparable intervention with similar beneficiaries and results
- **Significant:** Findings show that the program had a positive and statistically significant effect on beneficiaries
- **Up-to-date:** Recently published or most recent available
- **High Quality:** Use well-implemented and appropriate research methodologies given the research questions of interest
- **Reputable:** Source with no stake in outcome and published in a peer reviewed journal or by credible organization

Evidence Continuum



Causation

Low

High

Preliminary	Moderate	Strong
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Outcome results from performance measurement or outcome evaluations• Doesn't show causality• No comparison group	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Impact evaluations• Show causality, compares intervention recipients to non-recipients• Comparison groups: Quasi-experimental Design	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Impact evaluations• Show causality, compares intervention recipients to non-recipients• Randomly-assigned control groups: Experimental Design

Evidence Continuum

- Shape Up: afterschool obesity prevention program

Preliminary	Moderate	Strong
Performance measurement shows that 75% of girls age 14-16 participating in the Shape Up program increased knowledge of healthy food choices. Outcomes evaluation	A 2005 impact evaluation by internal evaluators (using a quasi-experimental design) found that after 12 weeks, the girls in the program made 50% more healthy food choices than the comparison group	A 2010 impact evaluation of the program by University of MN using experimental design/ random assignment found after 12 weeks, the girls in the experimental group made 50% more healthy food choices than

Practice Activity



Key Points

- Theory of change elements include the community problem, an intervention designed to address the problem, and outcomes that occur as a result of the intervention
- Data that documents the prevalence and severity of the problem is not the same as evidence that supports the intervention
- Evidence enables us to determine whether a program is achieving its outcomes
- Evidence should inform all stages of program design and implementation

Additional Resources

- AmeriCorps Performance Measurement Resources:
<http://www.nationalservice.gov/resources/performance-measurement/ameri-corps>
- CNCS Performance Measurement Core Curriculum:
<http://www.nationalservice.gov/resources/performance-measurement/training-resources>
- AmeriCorps State and National Evaluation Resources:
<http://www.nationalservice.gov/resources/ameri-corps/evaluation-resources-ameri-corps-state-national-grantees>