



Designing Effective Action for Change

How a Theory of Change helps you clarify the cause-and-effect relationship at the heart of your program

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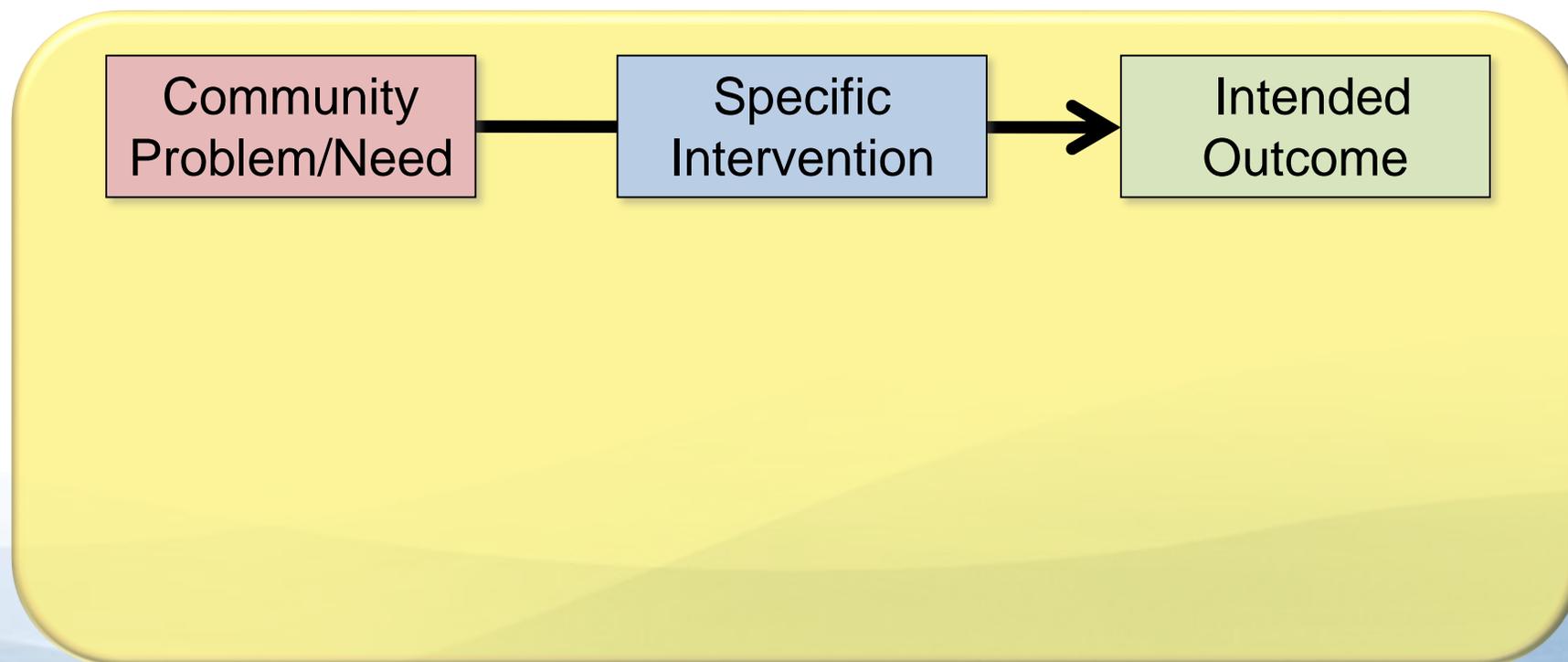
Developed by JBS International for the Corporation for National & Community Service

Learning Objectives

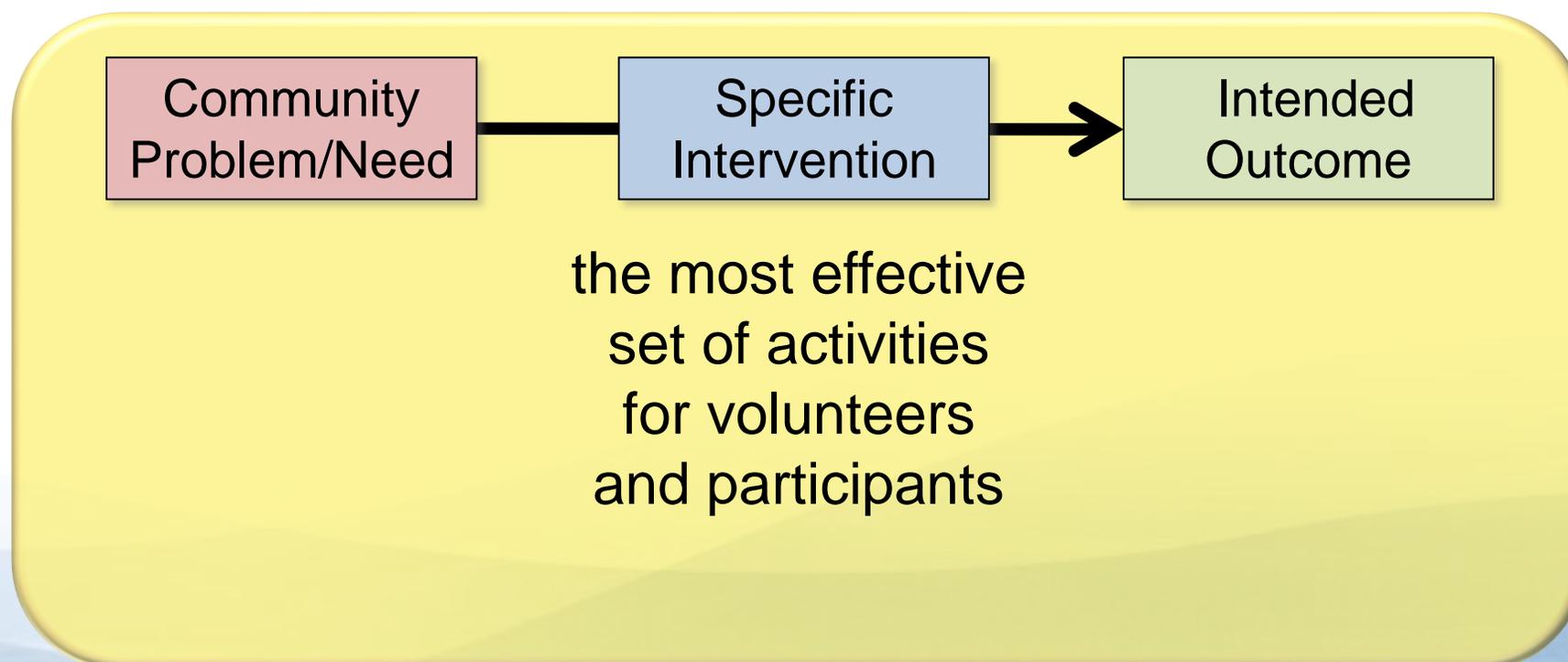
By the end of the module, you will be able to:

- Describe the benefits of a Theory of Change
- Define the three elements needed to construct a Theory of Change
- Identify how the Theory of Change informs the program design

Theory of Change Elements

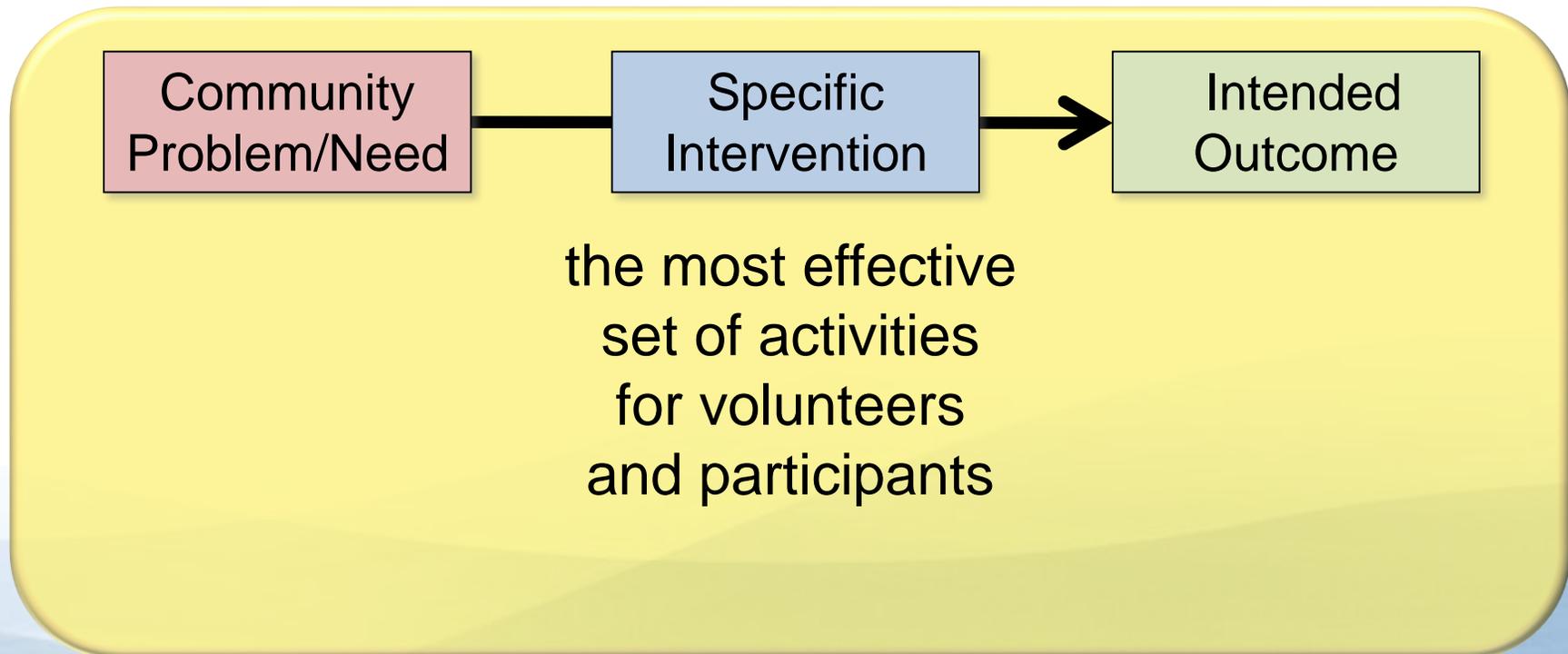


Theory of Change Perspective



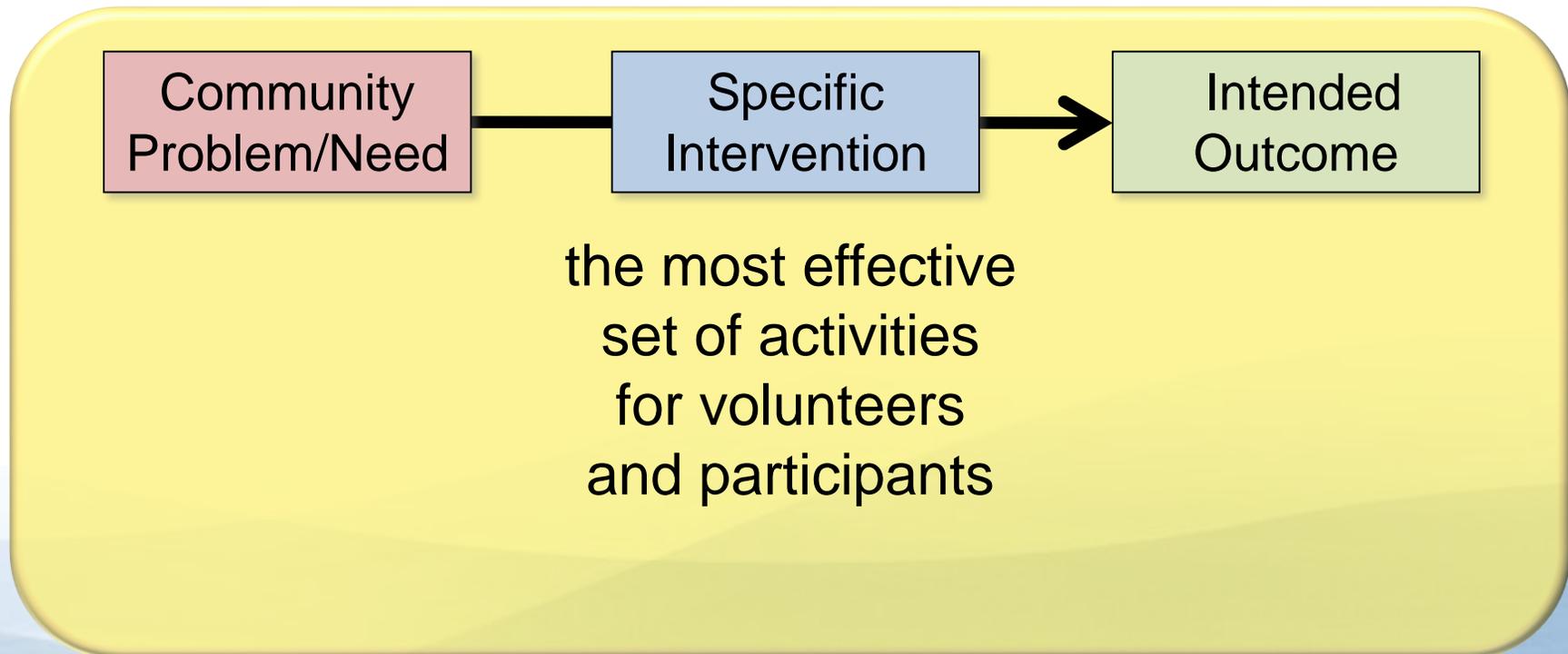
- Looks at cause and effect relationships

Theory of Change Perspective



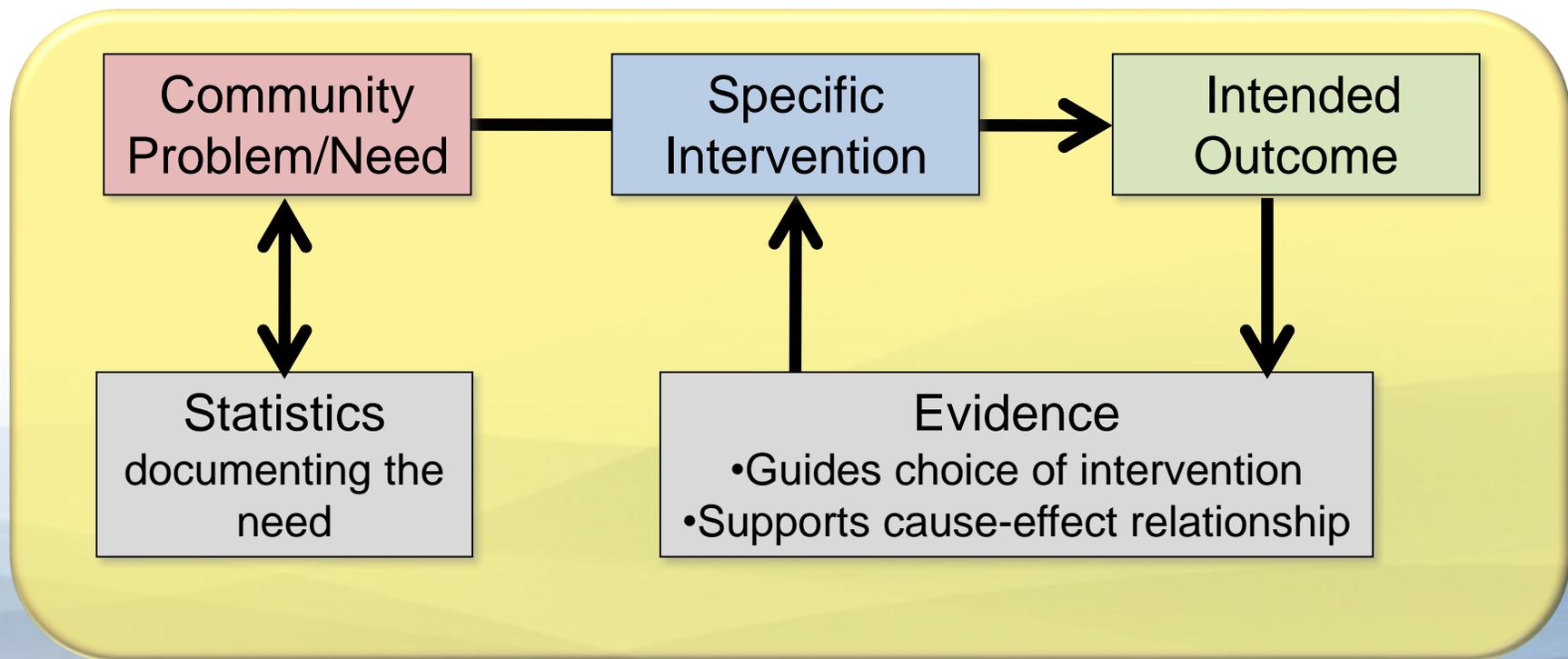
- Identifies specific interventions to achieve the desired result

Theory of Change Perspective



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

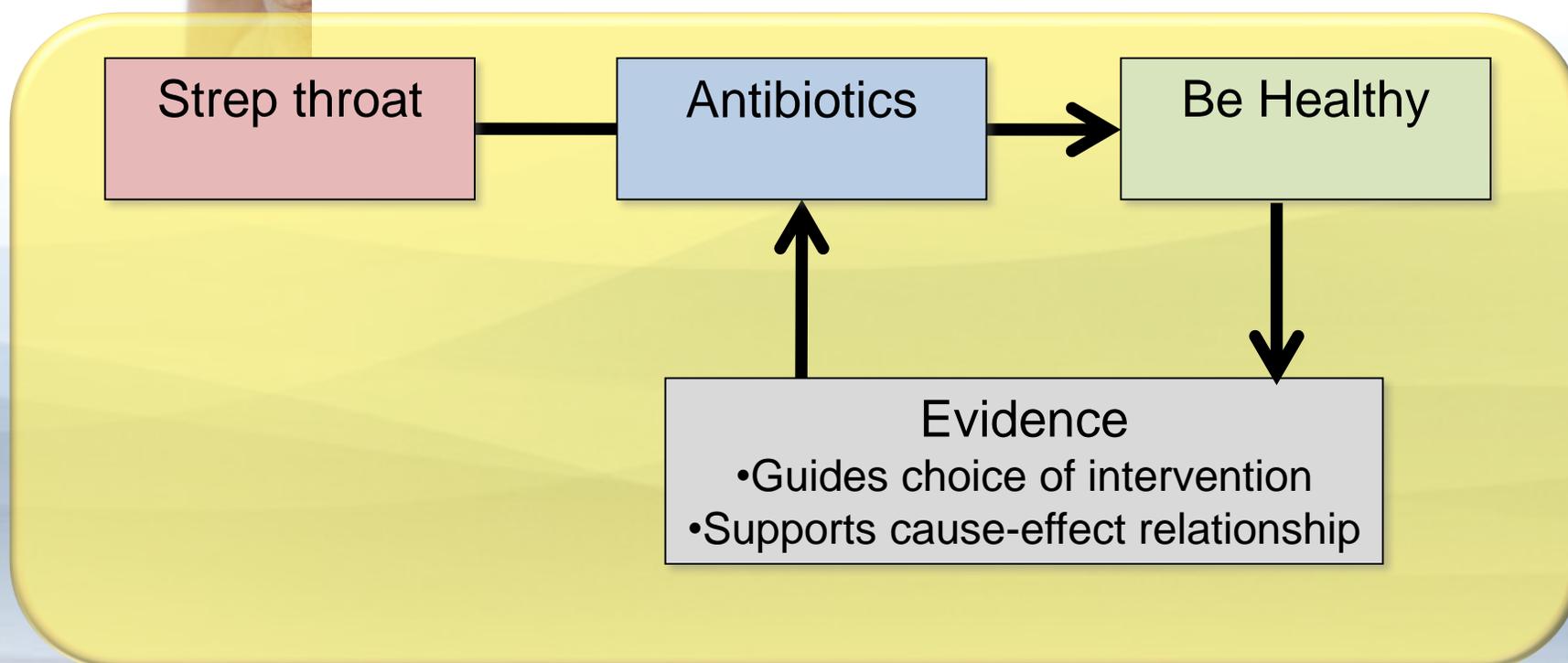
Theory of Change Elements



Everyday Life Example



- I have strep throat (problem)
- I will take antibiotics (intervention)
- I will get better (outcome)



Everyday Life Example

Evidence:

- Guides choice of intervention
- Supports cause-effect relationship

But which antibiotic(s) fight strep the best?
(Look at evidence to make the choice)

Example: Riverton Literacy Corps

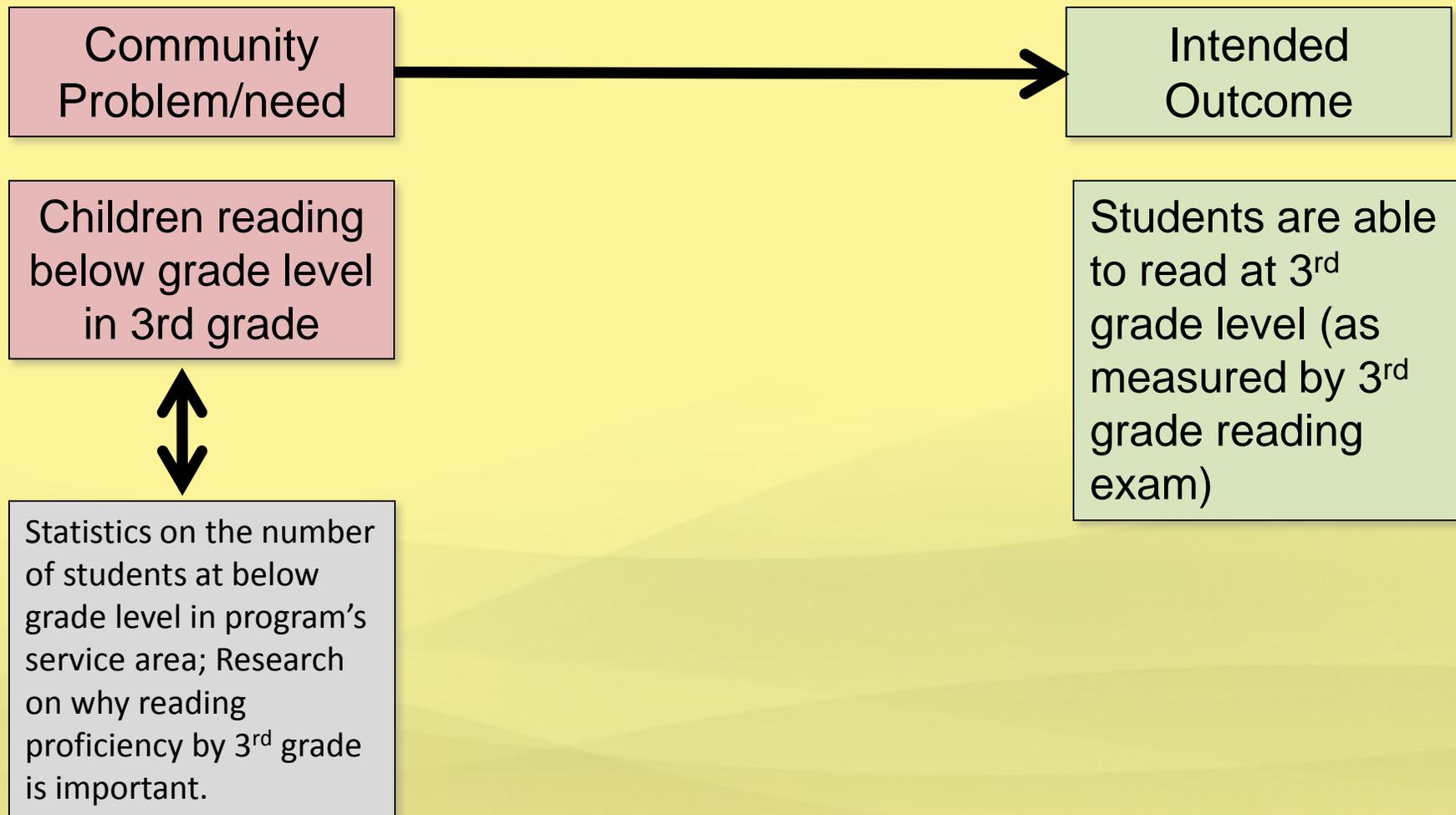
Community
Problem/need

Children reading
below grade level
in 3rd grade

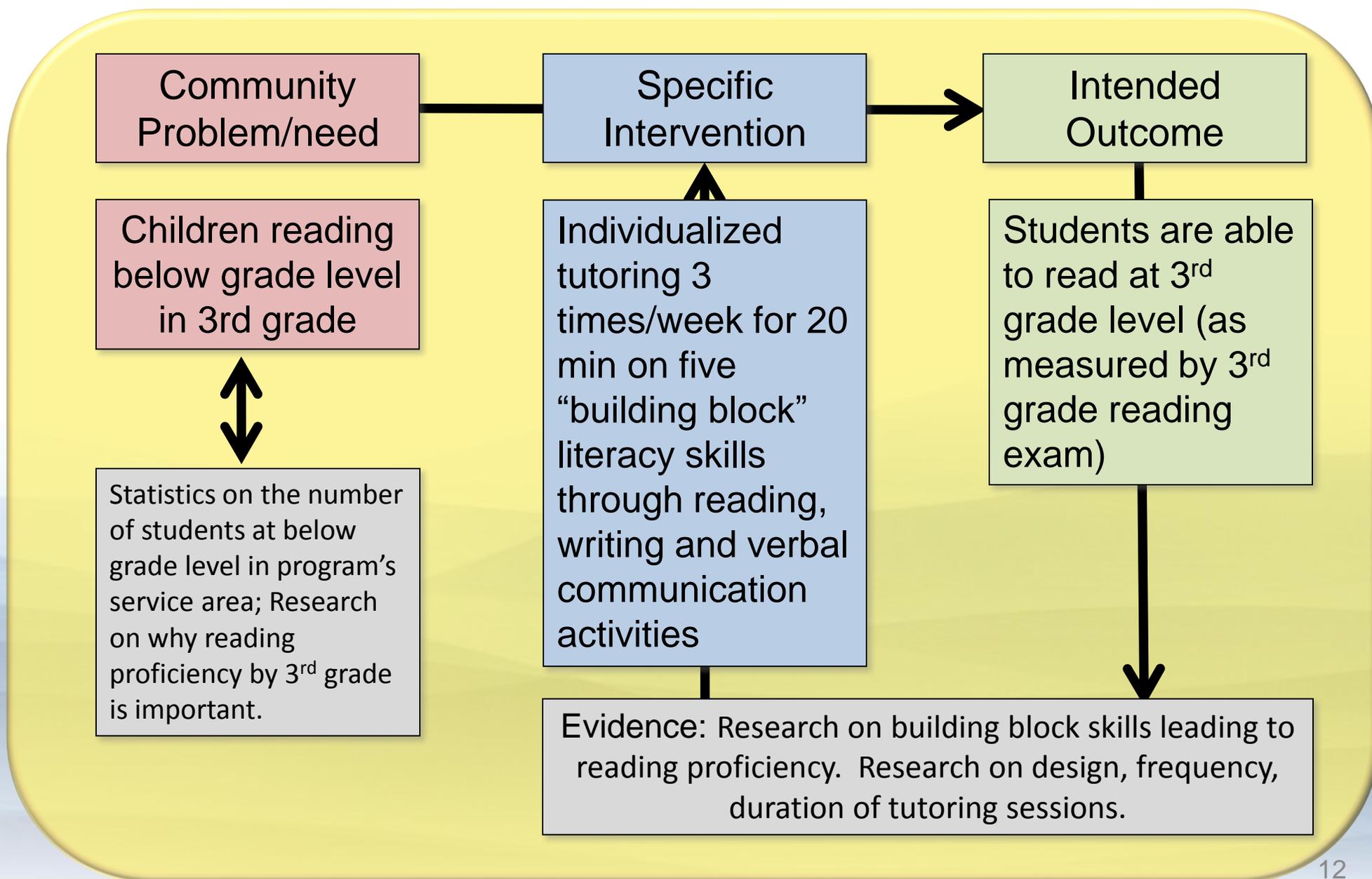


Statistics on the number
of students at below
grade level in program's
service area; Research
on why reading
proficiency by 3rd grade
is important.

Example: Riverton Literacy Corps

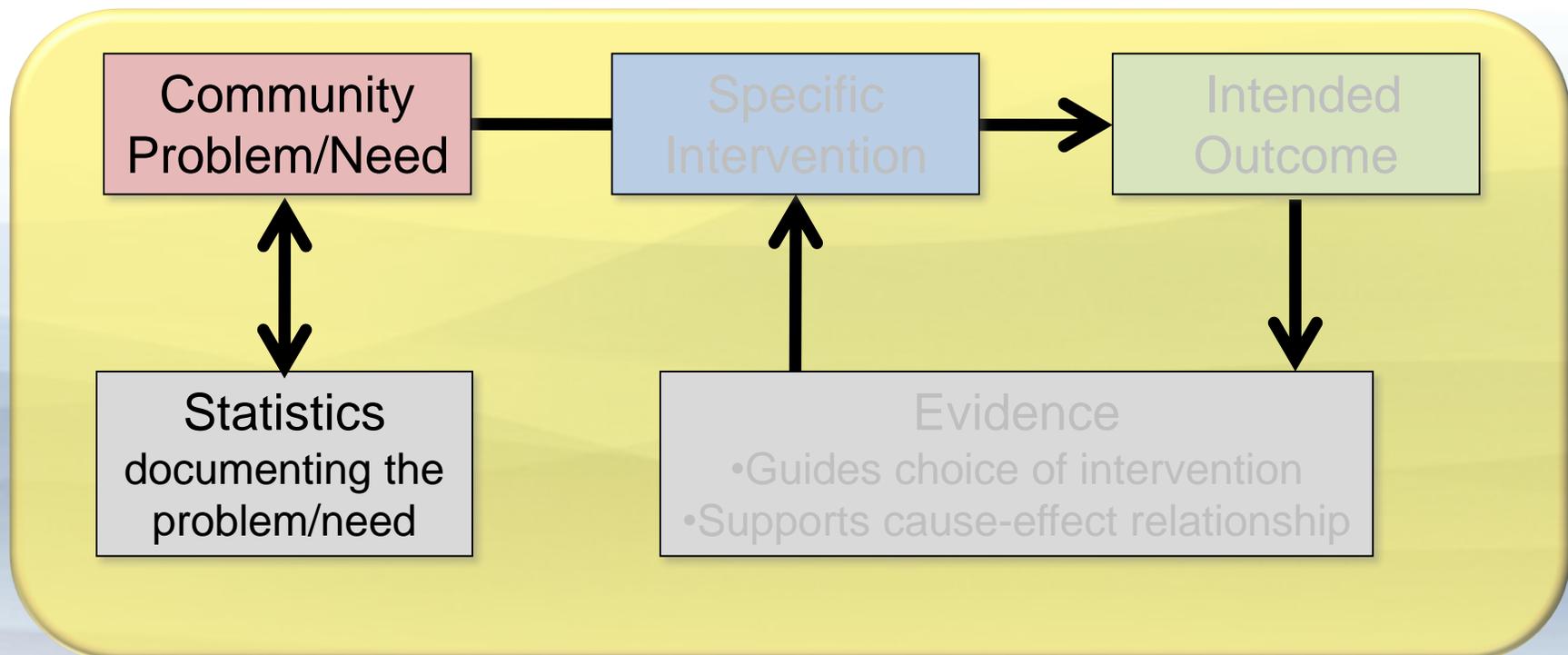


Example: Riverton Literacy Corps



Theory of Change Elements

Community Problem/Need is the specific issue your project, with its specific intervention (service activity), is designed to address. What is the extent and severity of this need in the community?



Theory of Change Elements

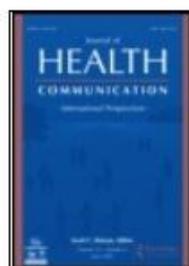
Statistics

documenting the
problem/need



Journal of Health Communication: International Perspectives

Volume 12, Issue 6, 2007



Evaluating a Minor Storyline on *ER* About **Teen Obesity**, Hypertension, and 5 A Day

DOI: 10.1080/10810730701508385

Thomas W. Valente^{a*}, Sheila Murphy^a, Grace Huang^a, Jodi Gusek^a, Jennie Greene^a & Vicki Beck^a
pages 551-566

Version of record first published: 29 Aug 2007

Journal of Nutrition Education and Behavior
Volume 40, Issue 3, Pages 168-174, May 2008

Evaluation of a School-based Teen Obesity Prevention Minimal Intervention

[Doris A. Aboud](#), EdD, CHES  [David B. Black](#), PhD, MPH, CHES, [Daniel G. Coster](#), PhD

Community Problem/Need

Data documenting problem/need 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

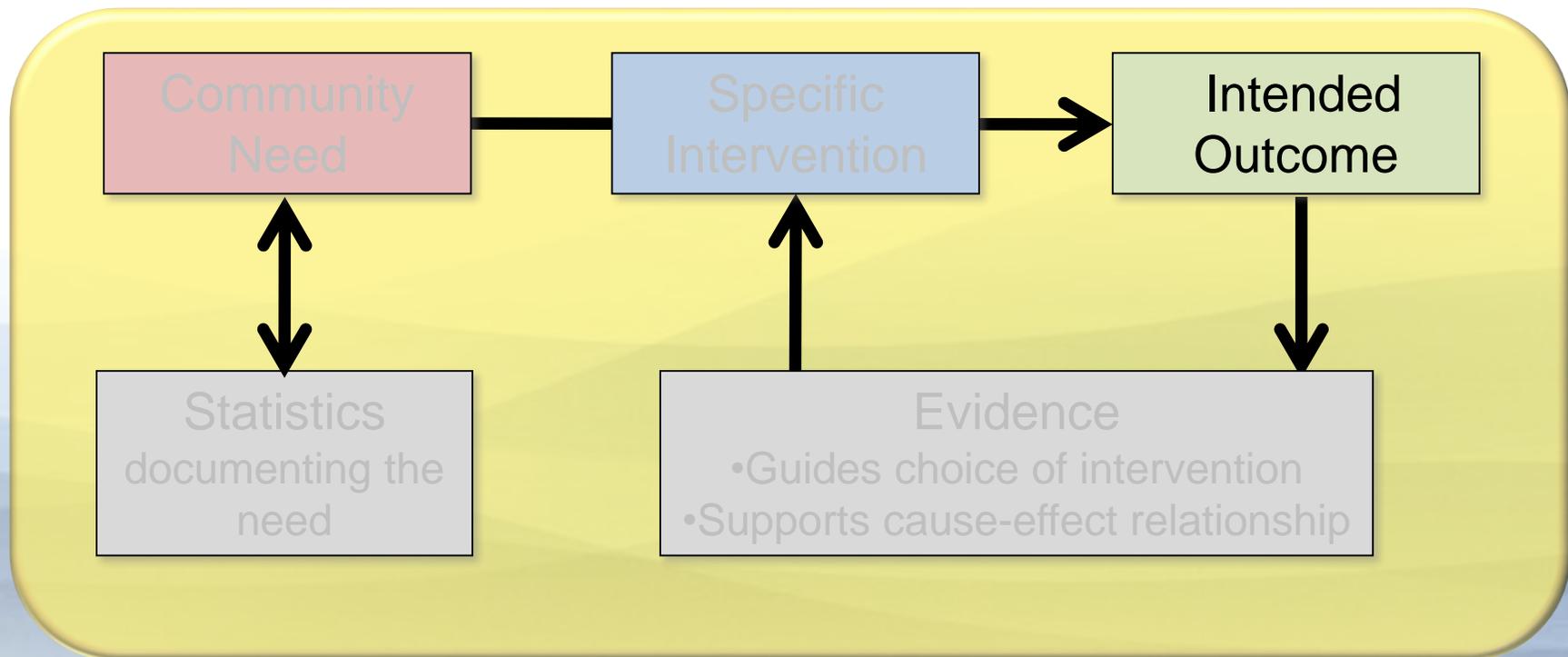
Healthy Futures Program Example

- **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 need?



Identifying the Intended Outcome

Healthy Futures Program Example

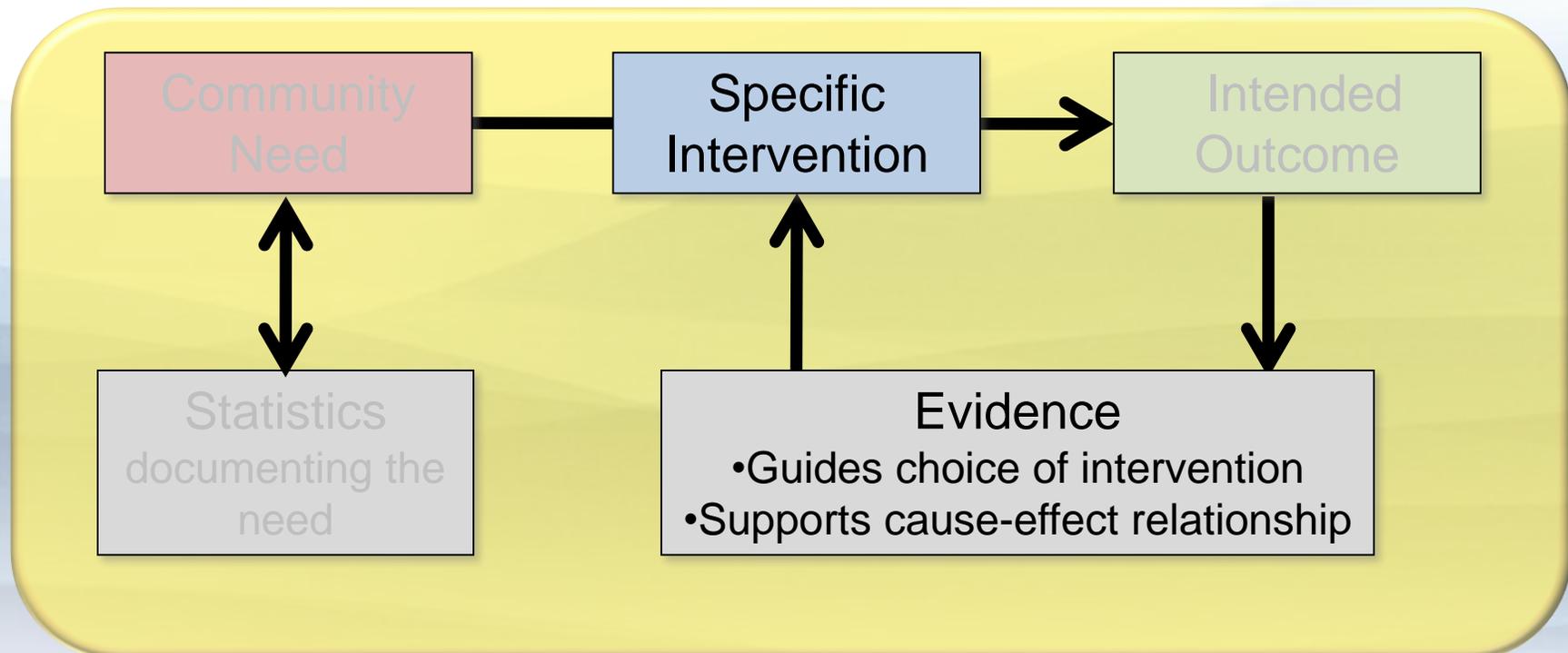
Possible outcomes to measure:

- 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



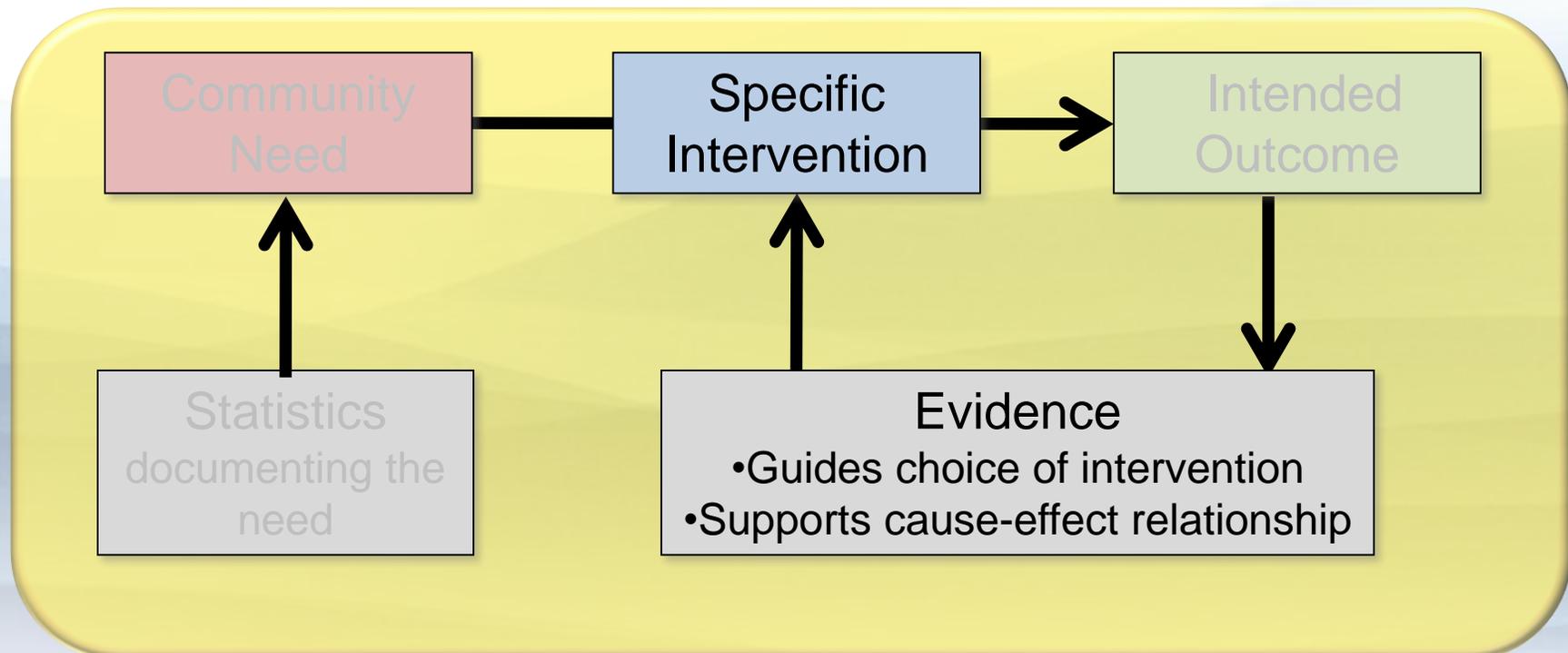
Intervention

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?



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Intervention

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

- **Design** (who does what with whom?)
- **Dosage**
 - **Frequency** (how many sessions a week?)
 - **Intensity** (length of each session)
 - **Duration** (how many total weeks of sessions?)

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 YOUR THEORY OF CHANGE:

PLAUSIBLE: Does the logic of the model seem correct: “if we do these things, will we get the results we expect?”

FEASIBLE: Are resources sufficient to implement the chosen intervention?

MEANINGFUL: Are intended outcomes important? Is the magnitude of expected change worth the effort?

Summary of Key Points

- A theory of change identifies cause/effect
- The three elements of a theory of change; community problem/need, intervention, intended outcome are supported by data and evidence
- Data documenting community need should show scope, significance, and causes

Additional Resources



CNCS Priorities and Performance Measures:

<http://www.nationalserviceresources.gov/npm/home>

**Program-Specific Notices of Funding Opportunities
and Application Instructions:**

<http://www.nationalservice.gov>