What Does Evaluation Support Look Like in the Real World of Service Delivery?

Lessons from a sector-wide experiment

Making space. Valuing place.



Acknowledgement of Country

The Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare Tas Vic acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands and waterways on which we live and work. Today I acknowledge the lands of the Larrakia people.

We pay our respects to Elders past and present and we honour their enduring strength and aspirations for the future of their young people, communities and lands.





Today– Taking the evaluation journey from inside service delivery

What makes evaluation actually land in frontline services?... And why is this so hard?

Engage
What makes people want to participate ?

Embed
How can evaluation become useful here?

Enable
How can this be sustained?

Why is this still so hard?

WE KNOW EVALUATION CAN BE POWERFUL ... BUT …

What tends to frustrate you most about evaluation work?

01 Lack of Engagement

02 Data that doesn't answer the question

03 Evaluation added too late

04 Reports instead of learning

05 Capability that doesn't stick

? Reports that sit on the shelf ….

For services it might be -

- Data collection that is meaningless and/or burdensome
- Data collection that damages rapport with clients
- Ambitious end point outcomes, that are unrealistic for the cohort and ignore more meaningful short - medium term outcomes.

Central ideas

1. Same system. Different vantage points.

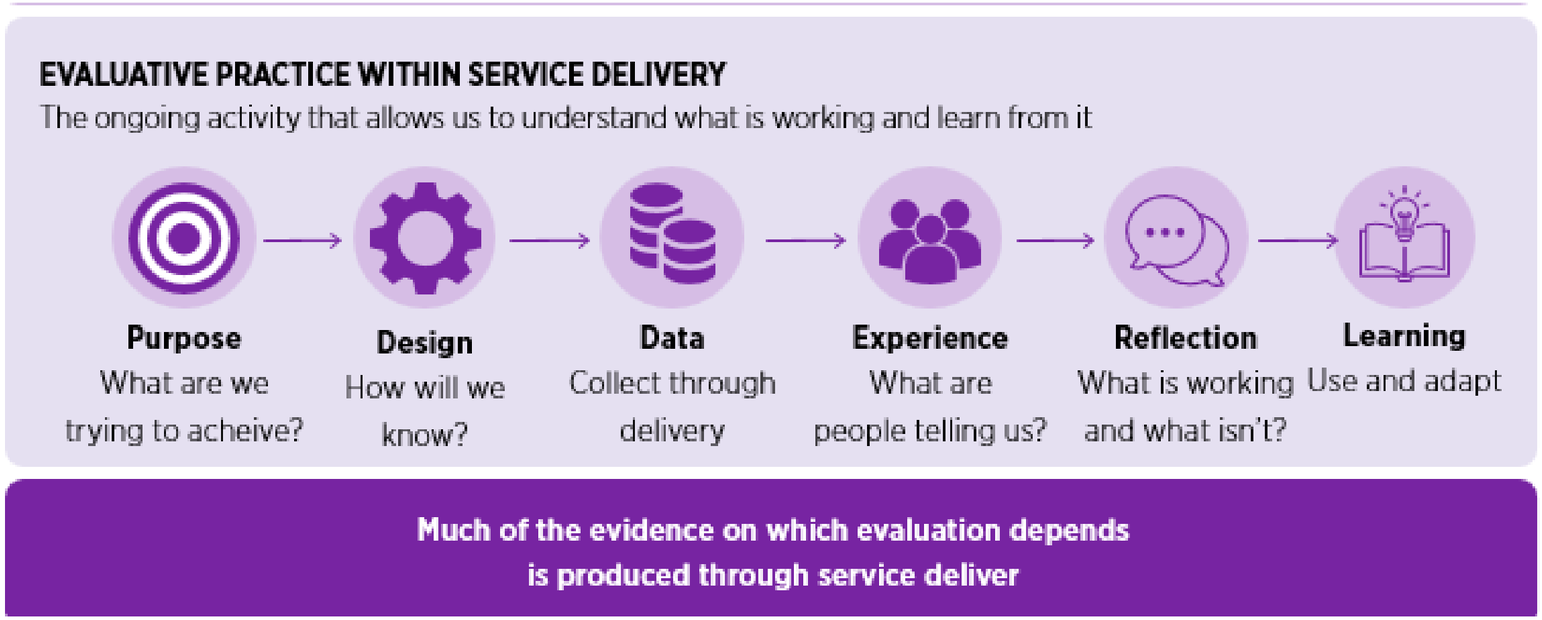
EVALUATORS / RESEARCHERS

SERVICE ORGANISATIONS

GOVERNMENT / FUNDERS

OTHERS

2. Evaluation as a process, not a product



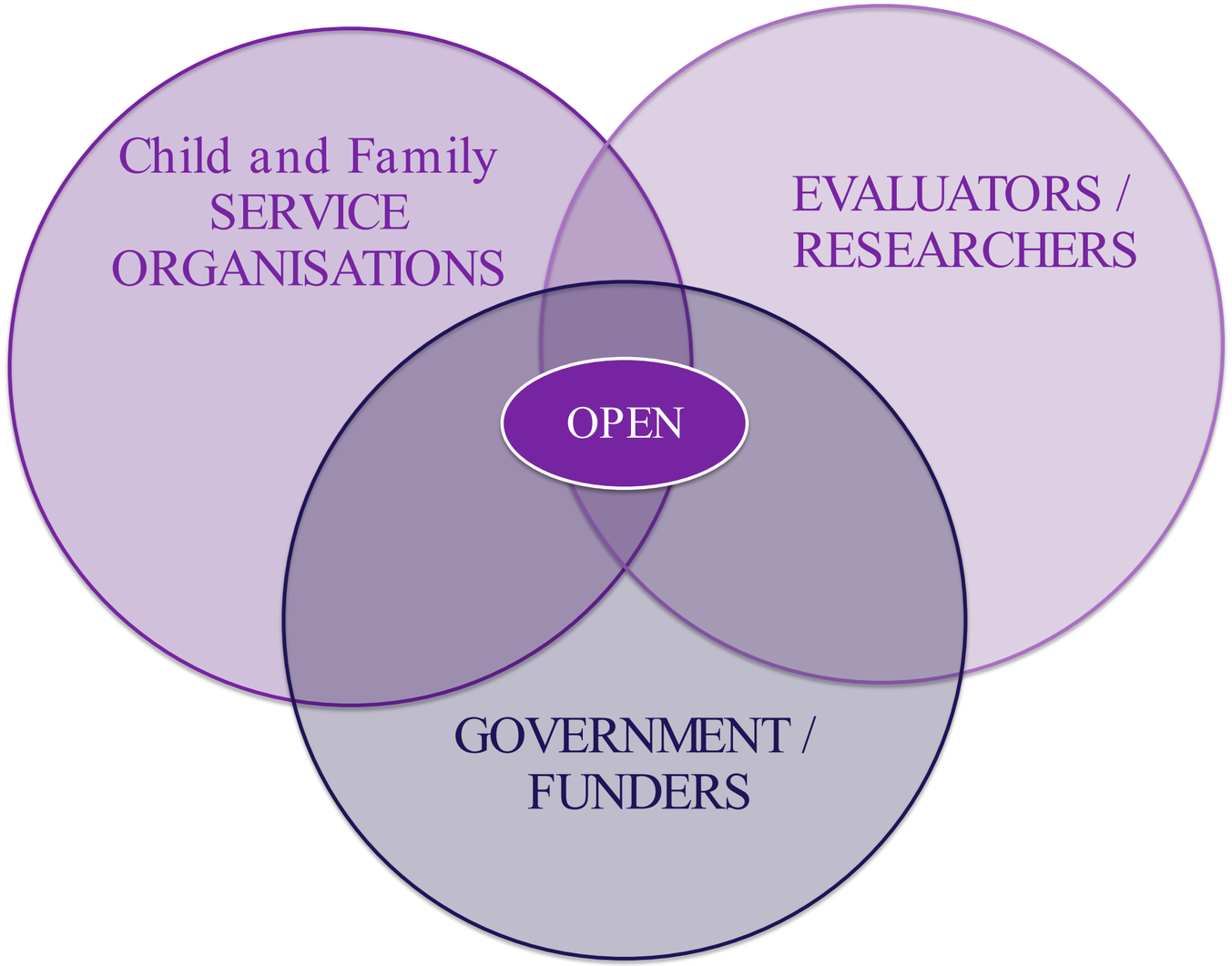
OPEN's Vantage point

In a position to see patterns that aren't always visible one evaluation at a time.

Outcome Practice and Evidence Network (OPEN):

Developed to strengthen the sector's ability to use the latest research and evaluate their programs to understand outcomes, learn and improve.

- Embedded in the sector
- Working across 150+ sector organisations
- Crossing boundaries - Connecting services, government and evaluation/research



Introducing



Mark Raynor

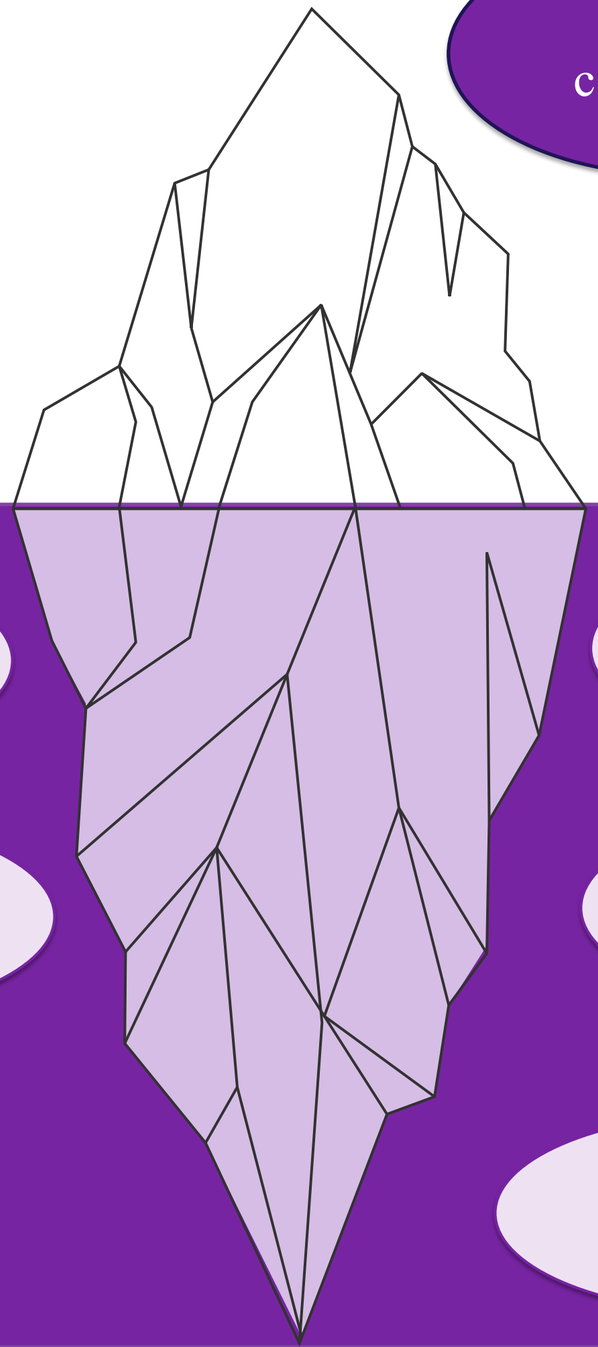
General Manager, Wombat Housing and Support Services

ENGAGE

Why would I participate in this ?



ENGAGE



Low capability

Not interested

Poor data / won't collect

Staff turnover

High risk and client need

Negative previous eval experience

Compliance driven data

Alienating technical language

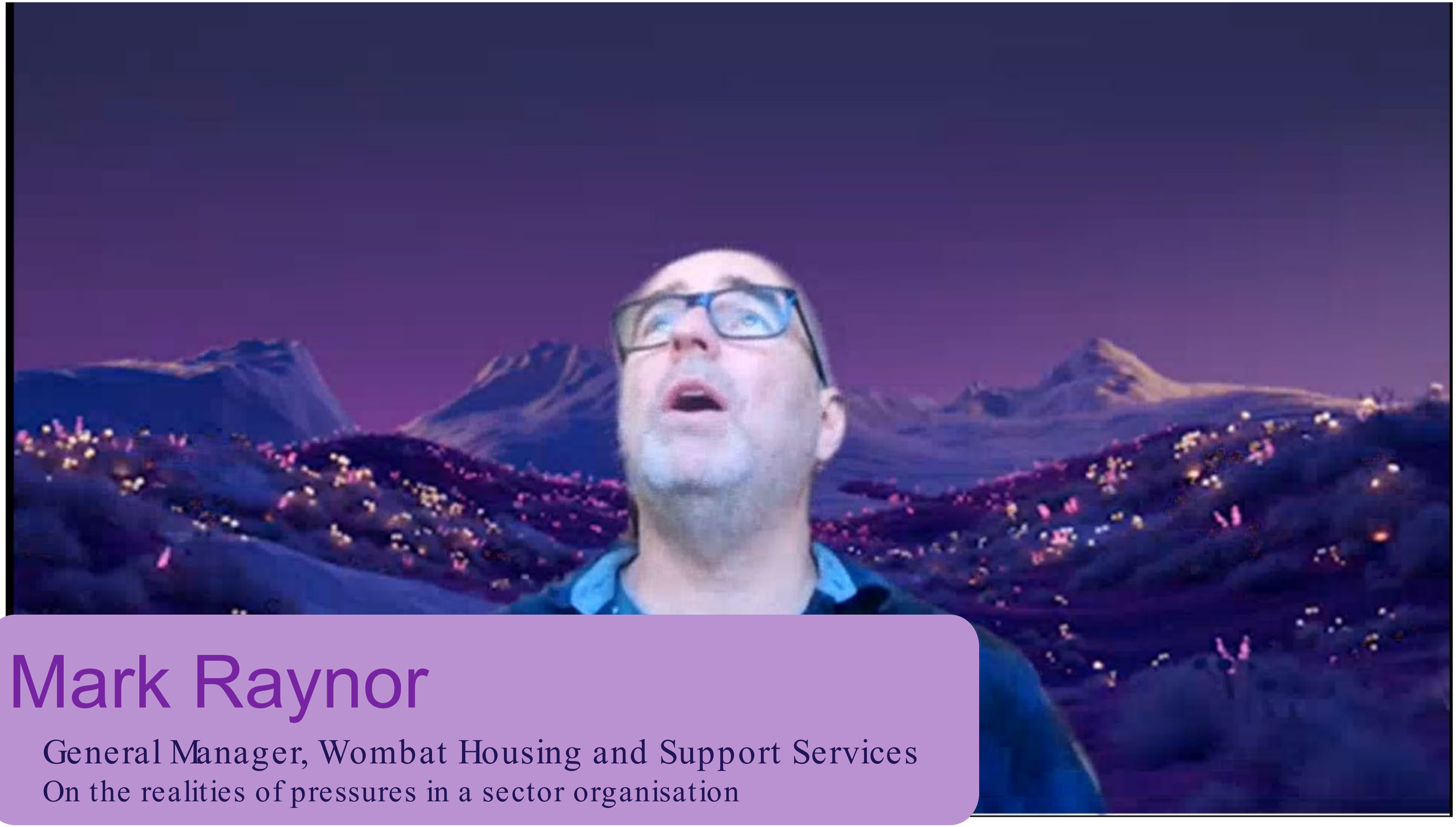
Intense service pressure

No time or resources allocated

Trust / fear or scrutiny

Organisational changes

Competing requirements



Mark Raynor

General Manager, Wombat Housing and Support Services

On the realities of pressures in a sector organisation



Mark Raynor

General Manager, Wombat Housing and Support Services

On ‘not being an expert’

Engagement – challenges and enablers

Thinking about times when you've struggled to get genuine engagement from services

- Can you provide example of what was going on, and what strategies have you found actually helped?

ENGAGE

What has helped us build buy-in?

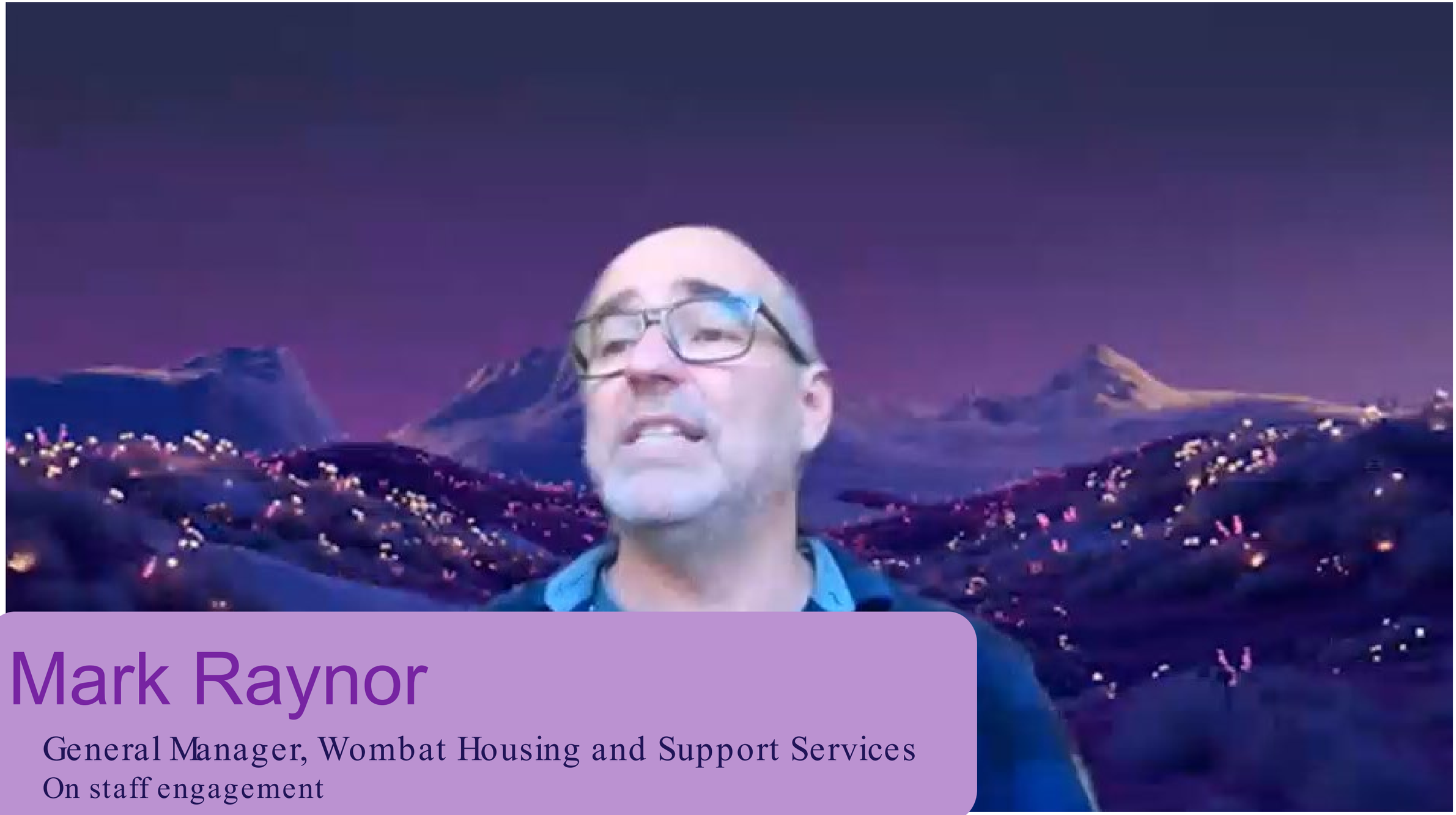
CONNECT	Start with their world and purpose
RECOGNISE	Show them they are already doing it
TRANSLATE	Make it fit their practice environment
GIVE BACK	Give value back, and build trust



Mark Raynor

General Manager, Wombat Housing and Support Services

On ‘not being an expert – part 2’



Mark Raynor

General Manager, Wombat Housing and Support Services

On staff engagement

EMBED

How can evaluation become useful practice within service organisations?



EMBED

Scenario: They want an evaluation

You've been commissioned to deliver an evaluation.

How have you used that opportunity to create value for the organisation beyond the evaluation product?

What did you build into the process? What did you leave behind?

EMBED

What should be left behind ? What could be left behind ?

WHAT REMAINS AFTER THE REPORT?

Shared UNDERSTANDING	Clarity about the service or progam - clearer outcomes | program logic | evidence needs
Embedded CAPABILITY	Ability to learn from the evaluative work - confidence | evaluative questions | data literacy
Organisational INFRASTRUCTURE	Ways to keep doing it - measures | tools & processes | learning routines

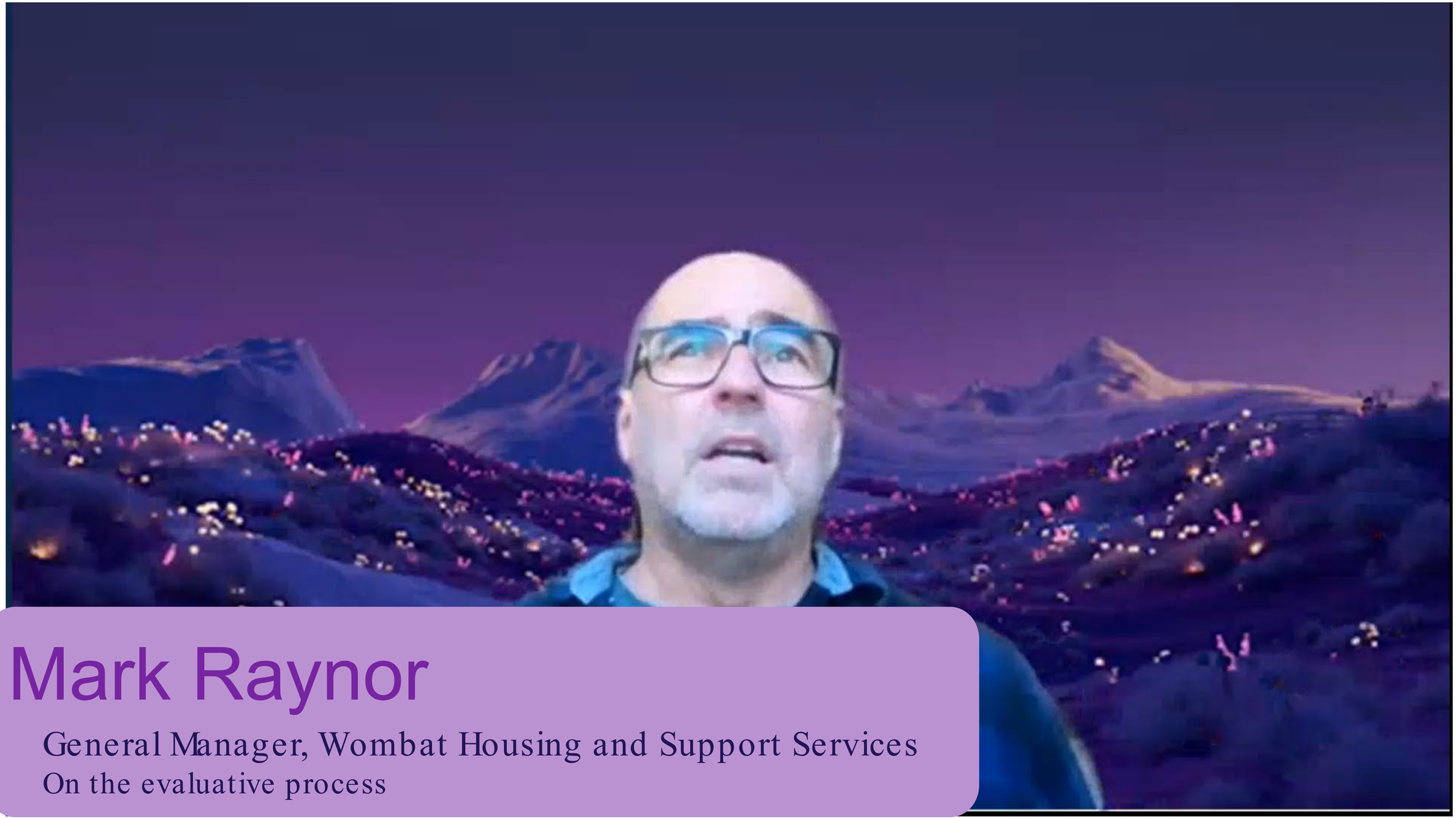




Mark Raynor

General Manager, Wombat Housing and Support Services

On organisational maturity



Mark Raynor

General Manager, Wombat Housing and Support Services

On the evaluative process

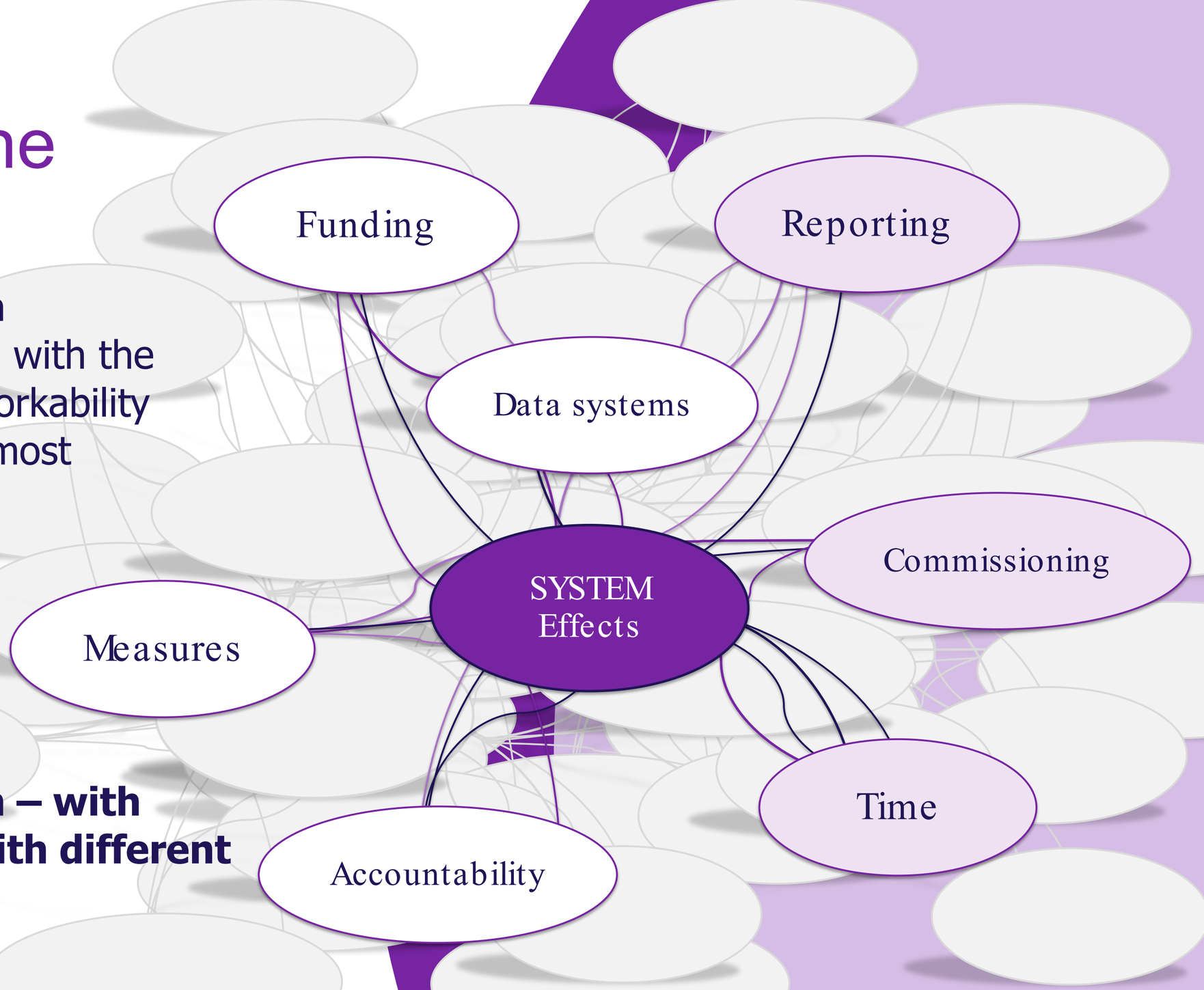
ENABLE

What makes useful evaluative practice possible to sustain?



Then you hit the system.

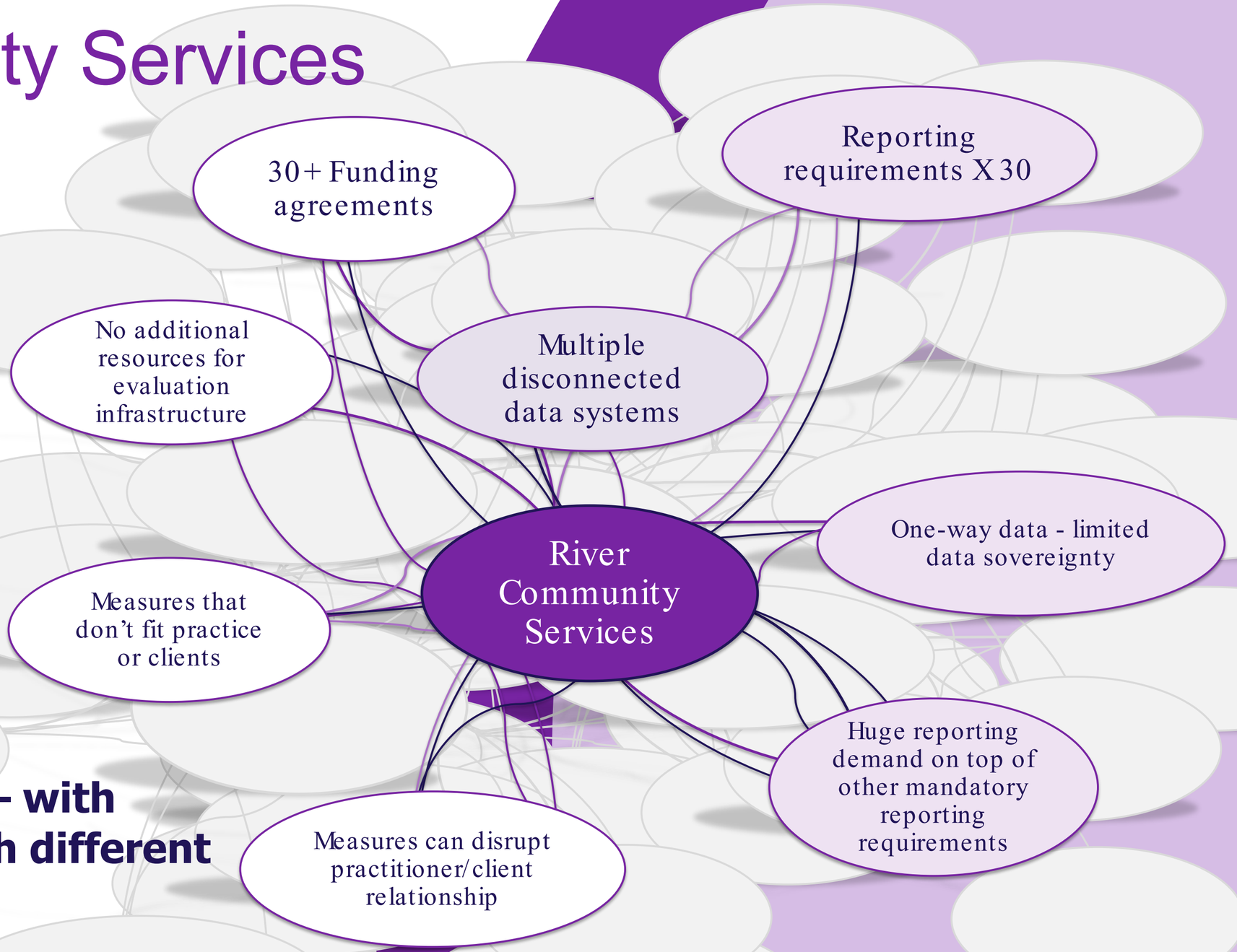
Capability can only take an organisation so far – faced with the barriers posed by the unworkability of the data infrastructure most organisations are left with.



A single organisation – with multiple contracts with different funders.

River Community Services

Committed to improving data and measuring outcomes, to know the difference they are making, inform decisions and supporting future funding



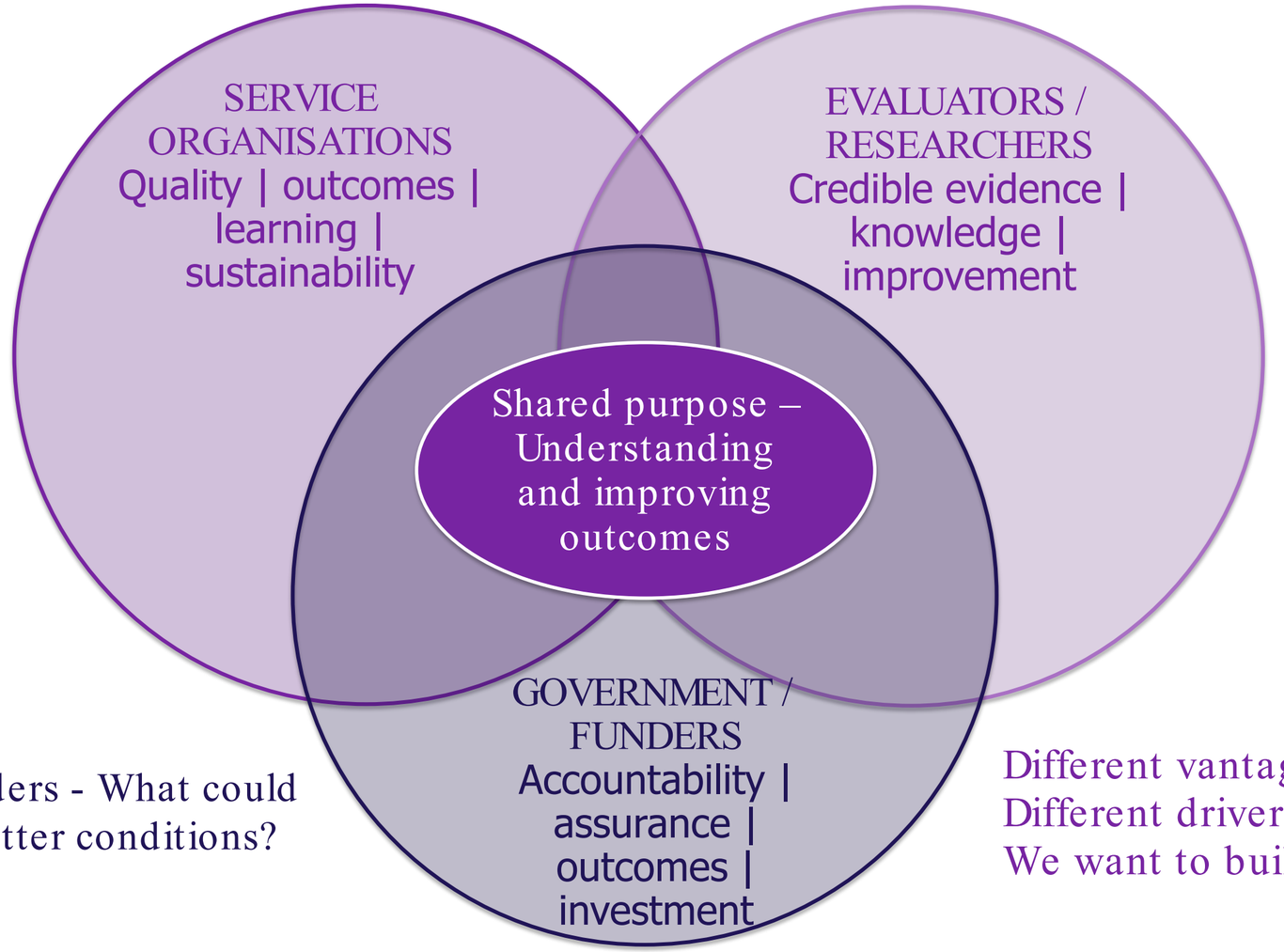
A single organisation – with multiple contracts with different funders.

What changed?

We learned to see the whole system

Each perspective reveals something the others cannot see alone.

Service orgs - What could make evaluation more useful and embedded?



Evaluators – Researchers What could increase enduring value?

Govt/ Funders - What could create better conditions?

Different vantage points. Legitimate purposes,
Different drivers and pressures.
We want to build shared understanding.

Wrapping up – Bringing the Journey together

ENGAGE	**Start with the commitment already there** – Understand the service context and translate evaluative practice into purpose, activities and processes that connect with this commitment.
EMBED	**Turn commitment into everyday evaluative practice –** Help evaluation become part of organizational practice - bringing clarity to the work: *what we are doing and why, what we are seeing, what does it add up to, what should we change?* these are the questions that matter
ENABLE	**Support conditions for evaluative practice to thrive –** Recognise that the system around services can enable or constrain what evaluative practice is possible and sustainable.

From where you sit

Service organisations already care about outcomes.

Our opportunity is to help turn that commitment into evaluative practice that works in their world.

Strong roots. Better routes. Less boundaries and more useful bridges.

What might we do differently from the different places we occupy in this system? Does this shift anything for you

In your practice, your organisation or the part of the system you play a part.

Thank you

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