

# Conducting Participatory Evaluation with Community Based Early Childhood Initiatives

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# What will be covered

- Centre for Community Child Health (CCCH) participatory evaluation model for working with community based early childhood services
  - Model fits with CCCH mission of 'Supporting Communities to Improve Children's Health'.
  - Outcomes based model of evaluation
  - Uses participatory approach
- Strengths and limitations of participatory outcomes based model
- Case Studies
  - Local Answers and Communities for Children
    - Reflected learnings- Strengths and Limitations
- Indigenous and CALD issues



# A definition

## Participatory Evaluation

- Is a process which people involved at various levels of a project engage in ongoing evaluation of the project and its effects. This focus of participatory evaluation is to actively engage those people who the project is intended for in all aspects of the evaluation process, including planning, analysis and applying learning from an evaluation process (Haviland 2004)



# Participatory Evaluation

## Key Principles ( Haviland 2004):

- To involve people who the evaluation is for in the process as active participants, rather than merely sources of information
- To build capacity of local community members to gather information, analyze, reflect and take more effective action
- To support the learning of all the people involved in an initiative or program
- To help communities commit to taking more effective action in an initiative or program



# CCCH rationale for participatory approach

- Interactive
- Places great emphasis on working in partnership with community agencies
- Work in a consultative role: providing technical advice and assistance to community agencies

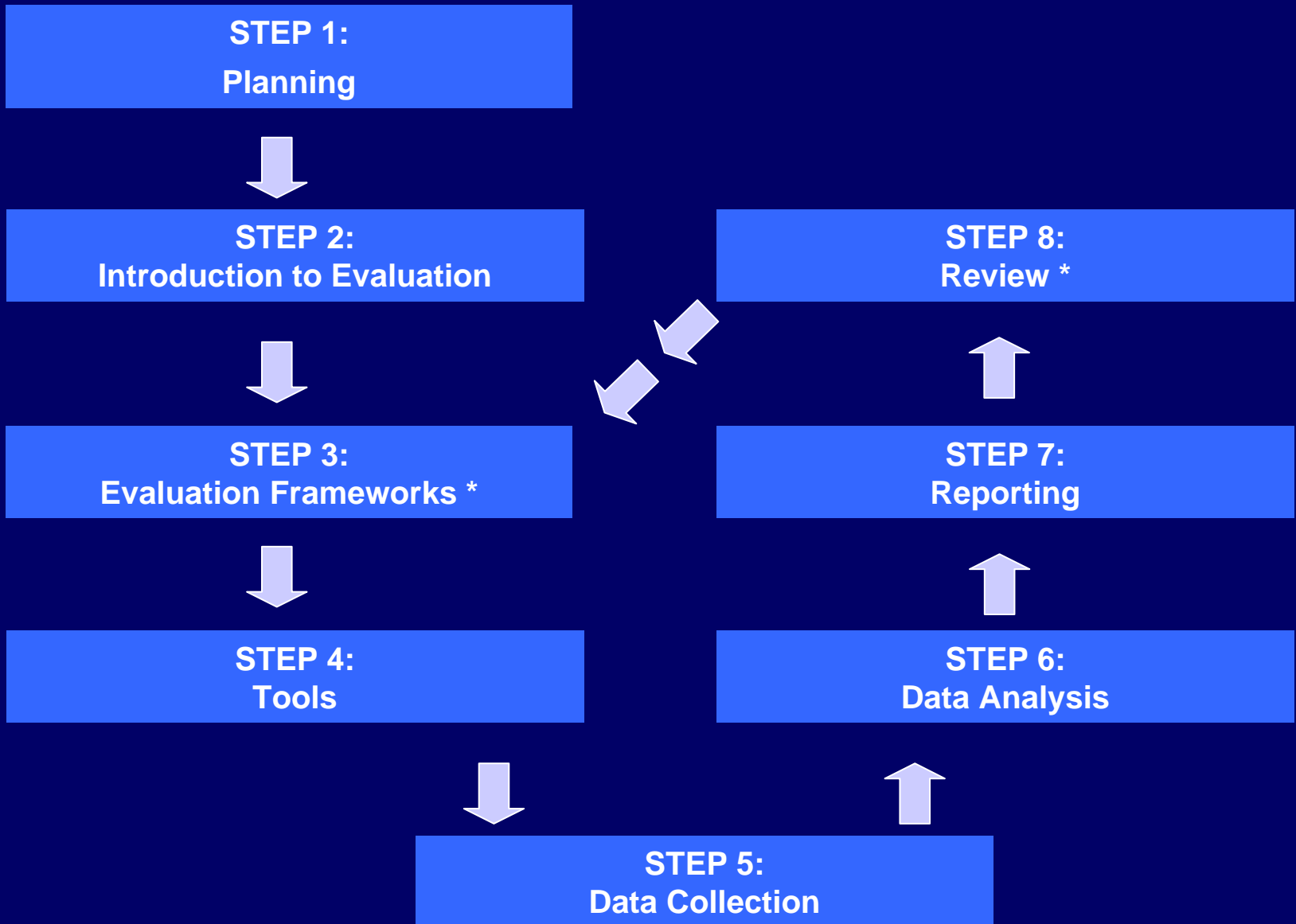


# CCCH rationale for participatory approach

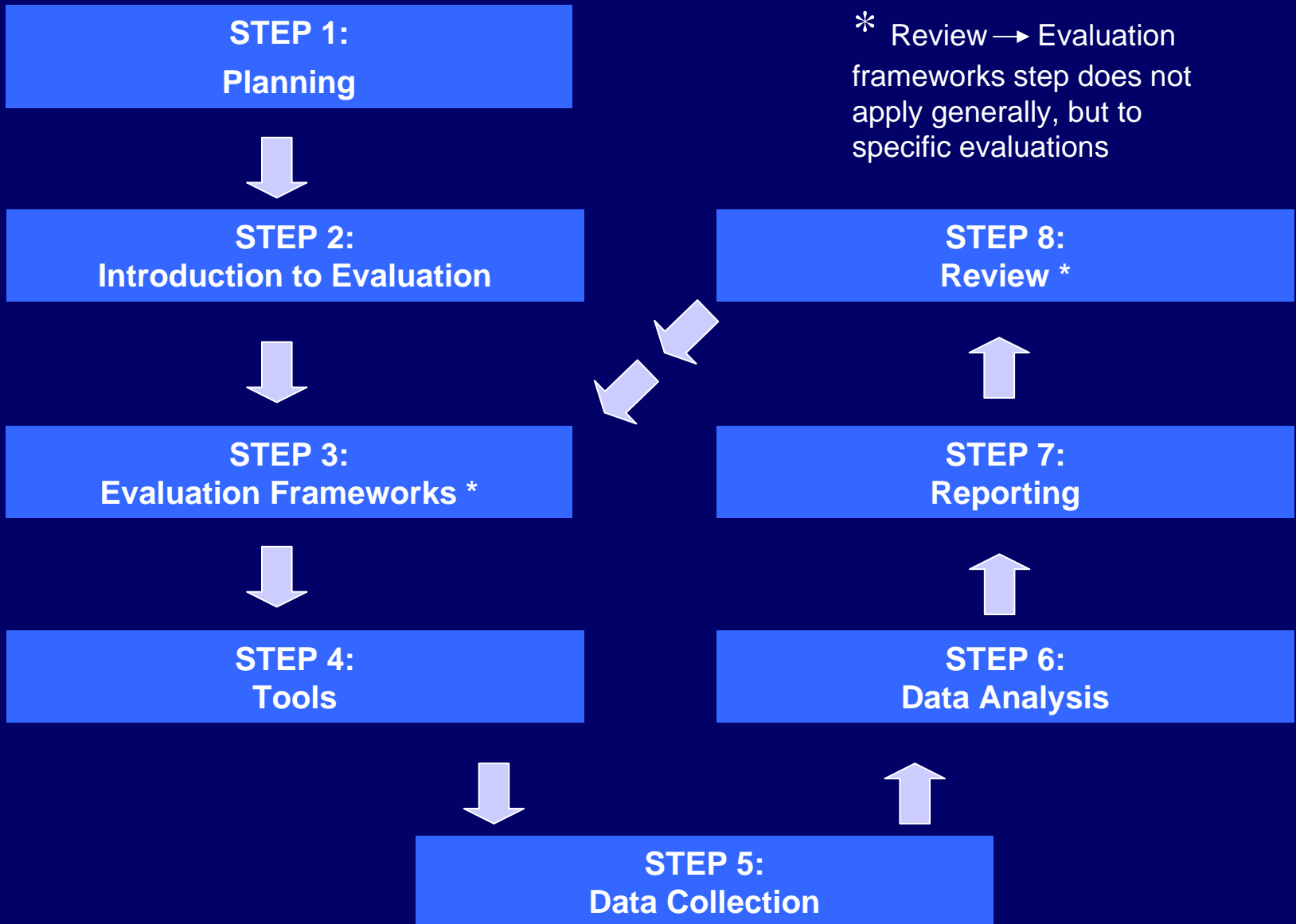
- Aim to support and teach community agencies skills to be able to conduct their own evaluations
- Aims to enhance existing strengths within a community or agency using local resources to build capacity of a community and empower community members as well as generate ownership
- Model strongly encourages communities to shift evaluation focus from outputs to outcomes



# Key Steps in CCCH evaluation model

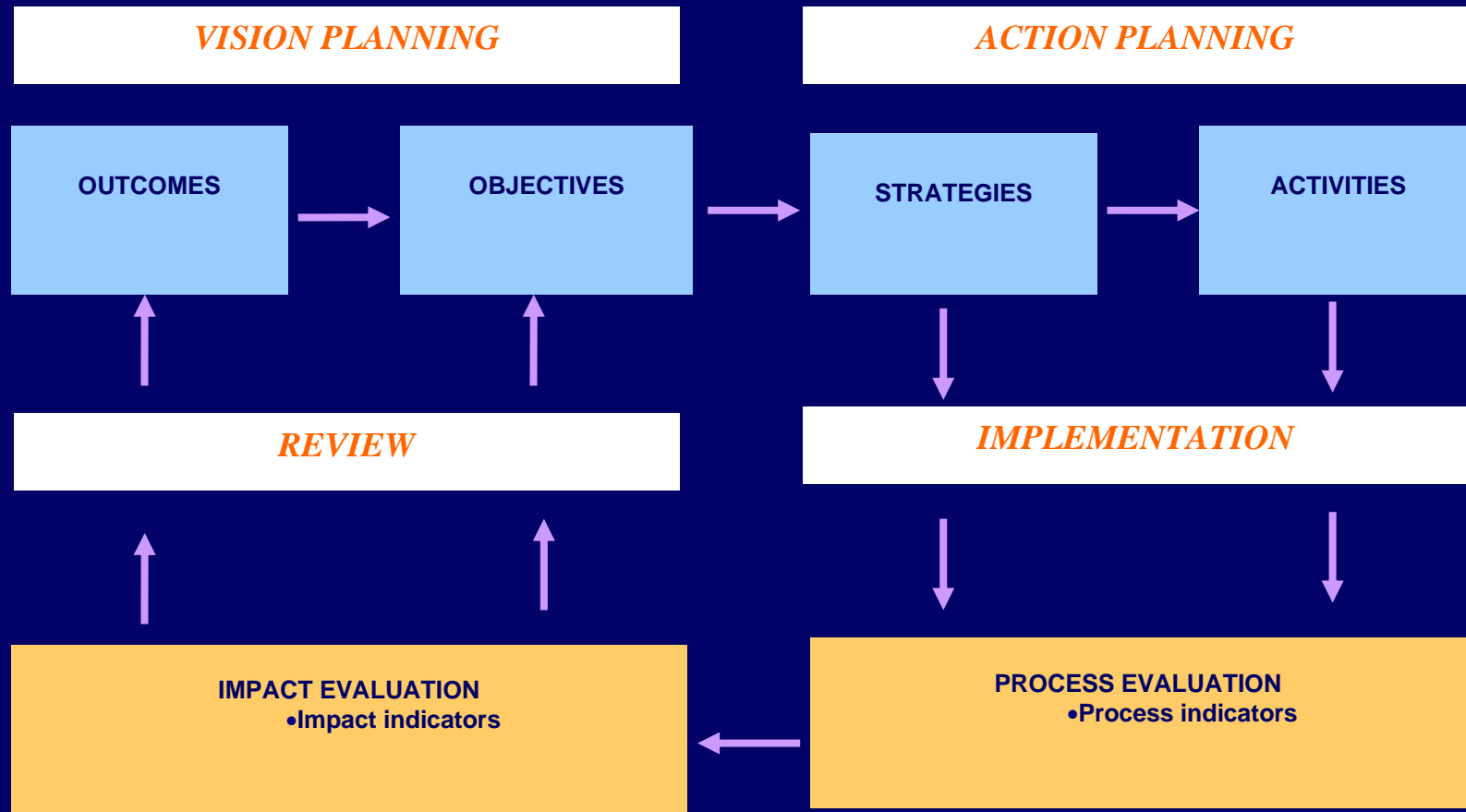


# Key Steps in CCCH evaluation model





# Outcome evaluation framework



# Key strengths of the evaluation approach

- Acknowledges existing community strengths
- Empowerment – builds capacity within the community and encourages ongoing feedback to improve on activities and strategies
- Sustainability – the evaluation approach lives on in the community
- Increases the understanding and sense of ownership of evaluation results



# Key strengths cont.

- The 'community agent' is well connected with the community and knows the issues
- The approach is cost effective
- The focus is what is best for communities, families and children – 'community centred'



# Key challenges of the evaluation approach

- Requires time, particularly in initial phase (and review phase if applicable)
- Ensuring evaluation is valued by all
- Developing strategies and objectives requires practice – often a new way of working
- Understanding the approach differs to an independent evaluation



# Case studies

- Local Answers
- Communities for Children



# Local Answers

- A national initiative funded by Australian Government
- Designed to strengthen disadvantaged communities by funding local small scale time limited projects to help communities identify opportunities to develop skills, support children and families and foster proactive communities
- CCCH contracted to develop outcomes based reporting system including an evaluation framework



# Local Answers

CCCH role in participatory evaluation approach:

- Explain to sites the importance of evaluation
- Produce a 'how to' guide to design an outcomes evaluation framework
- Assist sites to develop data collection tools
- Provide evaluation support and advice as required
- Provide a report writing template based upon outcomes based framework and guidance on how to write a report



# Communities for Children (CfC)

- A national initiative funded by Australian Government
- Forty five sites were funded to develop and implement local strategies to achieve improved outcomes for children families and the community
- Two levels of evaluation-national and local
  - National evaluation followed traditional evaluation formats
  - Local evaluation was to be designed and carried about by the organisation of choice of the local NGO responsible for the initiative in each site (the facilitating partner)
- The CCCH was contracted as the local evaluator for seven of the 45 sites





# Communities for Children (CfC)

- According to government, the local evaluator role in CfC is to:
  - Advise on evidence for initiative design and implementation
  - Provide consultancy for evaluation, information management, data collection, storage and analysis
  - Supervise evaluation activity in the local initiative
  - Quality assure the data produced by local initiatives
  - Coordinate the local data collection on behalf of the national evaluators.



# Communities for Children (CfC)

- CCCH expanded on this role to emphasize working in partnerships with the local community to evaluate the strategies
- CCCH do not conduct the local evaluations of its sites directly
- Works in consultative role, providing technical advice to community partners with the aim of teaching them to be able to skills to be able to conduct their own evaluations
- Participatory approach as in Local Answers initiative.
- Two phases of *local* evaluation, where an interim report was generated, then from this report learnings about the process were used to review evaluation frameworks and make changes where required (outcomes, objectives, indicators, activities and particularly tools)



# Reflective Learnings

## Strengths

- Builds capacity and skills \*
- Community ownership of the program and the evaluation of it \*
- Helps community understand the overall purpose of the project
- Highlights strengths and weaknesses of community in a 'real' way
- Flexible
- Best way of people becoming 'change agents' for services they are operating
- Data you are looking for is the 'real' voices of the community
- Puts people in touch with process learnings (micro and macro)
- The recognition of what can be sustained
- Respectful of the community



# Reflective Learnings

## Challenges

- Time  
(amount of time required to build relationships, up skill people, consultation, working through processes)
- Reliability in terms of staffing  
(in context of CfC because of long term evaluation process)
- Logical but messy  
(because of numbers of people, numbers of services, differing skill levels, funding for evaluation)
- Loss of objectivity
- Awareness and valuing of evaluation- *'seen as an add-on'*



# Reflective Learnings Indigenous and CALD Issues

- Need to allow time for engagement of people
- Need to allow time to establish trust and ensure sufficient time and 'space' to build relationships
- Need to be aware and respectful of cultural issues
- Awareness of special requirements for sample: interpreting services, reciprocity
- The need for flexible and/or creative methods of data collection
- Key principle is respect



# Concluding remarks

- Use of participatory approach promotes respect
- CCCH principle is to respect the community you are working with
- Model how we would expect people in the community to work with each other (service to service, service to families/users of services)

*'valued, owned and directly relevant to the community'*



# Further Information

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