

Evaluating complexity and managing complex evaluations.

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Community Engagement Scheme (AACES)

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Session overview

Introduction

- Aims of the session
- What do we mean by 'complex'?

Presentations and questions

- Kate – aboriginal health – prioritisation of effort and maximising use of findings
- Jess and AACES - M&E – lessons learnt and telling a coherent story
- Stefan – knowledge brokering model at EPA Vic

Discussion

- Themes emerging – your experience and that of the presenters
- Tips for
 - (1) designing (2) managing (3) ensuring findings are used across a whole portfolio of programs / large programs

Defining complex

- **Simple** – known - clearly defined goals, well-specified activities that are effective in early all circumstances.
- **Complicated** – knowable - multiple, coordinated components with several objectives, operating differently with various target populations in diverse situations
- **Complex** – might broadly know the end in mind, but not the way to get there - use changing, adaptive, emergent strategies

Implications for M&E approach

Component	Clarity of Goals (ends) and Clarity of activities (means)	Logistical reality	M&E Approach
Capacity development of cohorts of individuals	Simple	Easy during training events, difficult afterwards & > 1000 participants	Strengthen institutions monitoring during training. Follow up with sample post training.
Community grants	Complicated	Difficult - 1000 grants in very remote areas	Combination of broad and shallow across all grants and narrow and deep for clusters
In-depth engagement to improve governance in selected areas	Complex	Moderate - only a few interventions, relatively easy to access, but multiple stakeholders	Action research Small rapid studies to guide implementation

Evaluating a complex program: The Koolin Balit Victorian Aboriginal health evaluation

Australasian Evaluation Society Conference, Perth, September 2016

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About Koolin Balit



\$61.7 million over 4 years

100+ projects


~ 40% State-wide strategies

~ 60% local solutions to local issues

Devolved governance, community-led decision making

8 Regional Aboriginal Health Committees

Evaluation approach



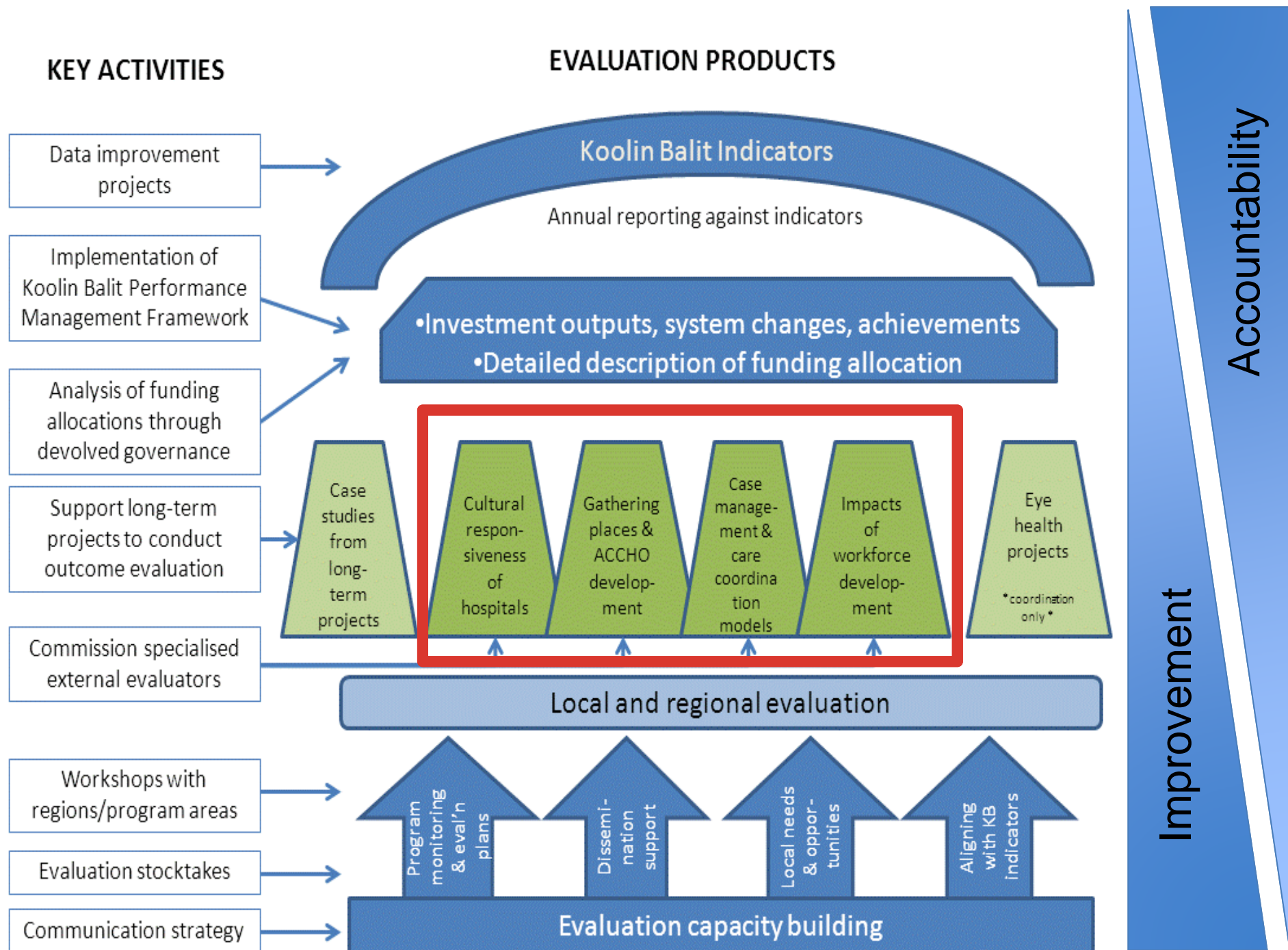
A past evaluation had failed to deliver useful information for community and program implementers

⇒ Priority 1: “what works?”

Government evaluation needing to account for public spending & advocate for more

Strong community drive to make a difference, quickly

=> Priority 2: Accountability – to government & community



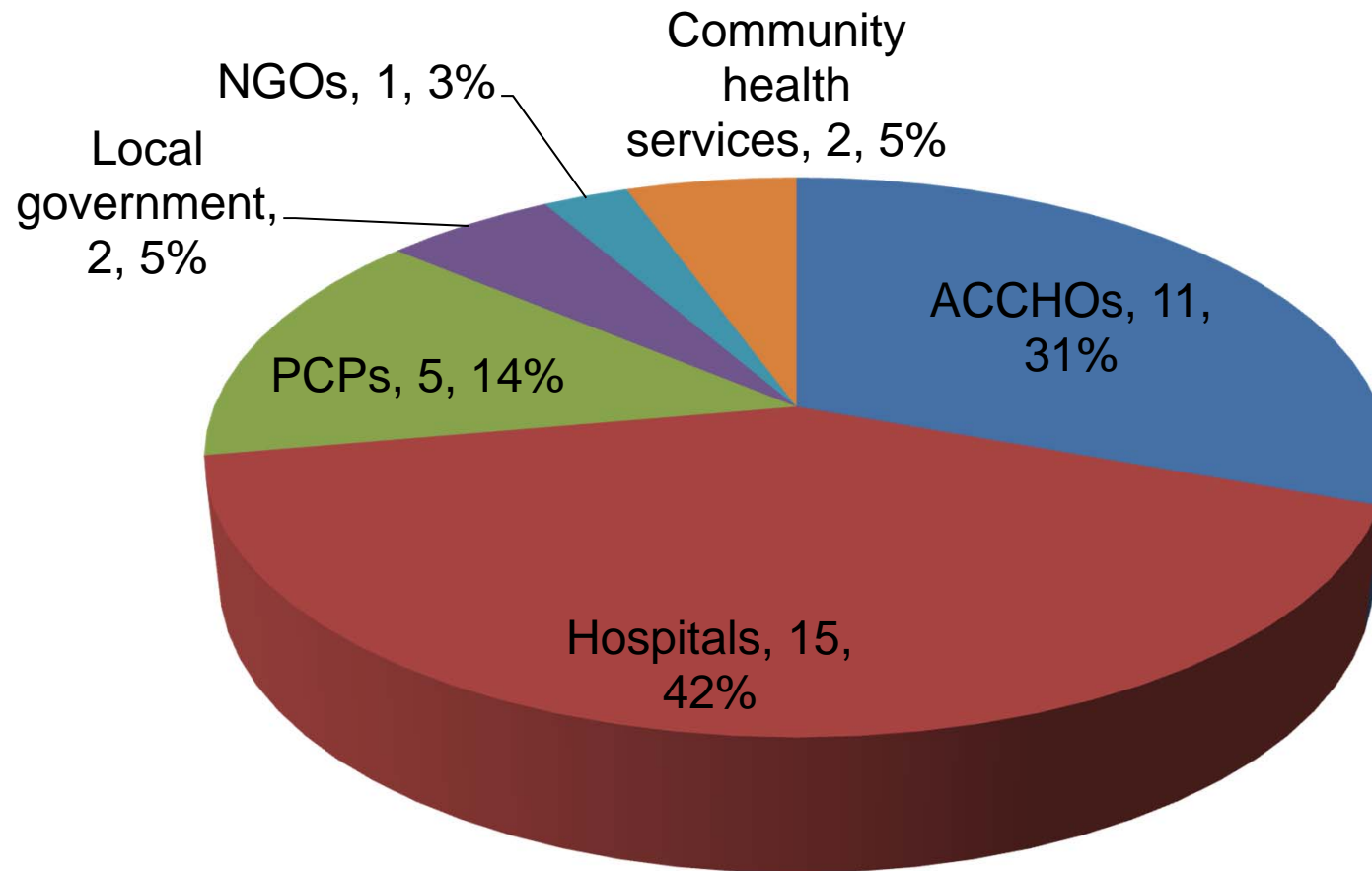
Choosing 4 priority areas



Process:

- Program logic
 - Thematic analysis of (known) projects
 - Working with incomplete information
 - Criteria
 - Expert advisory group
1. Investment size
 2. Opportunities for replication
 3. Opportunities for comparability
 4. Critical information needs

Organisations directly engaged in the evaluations

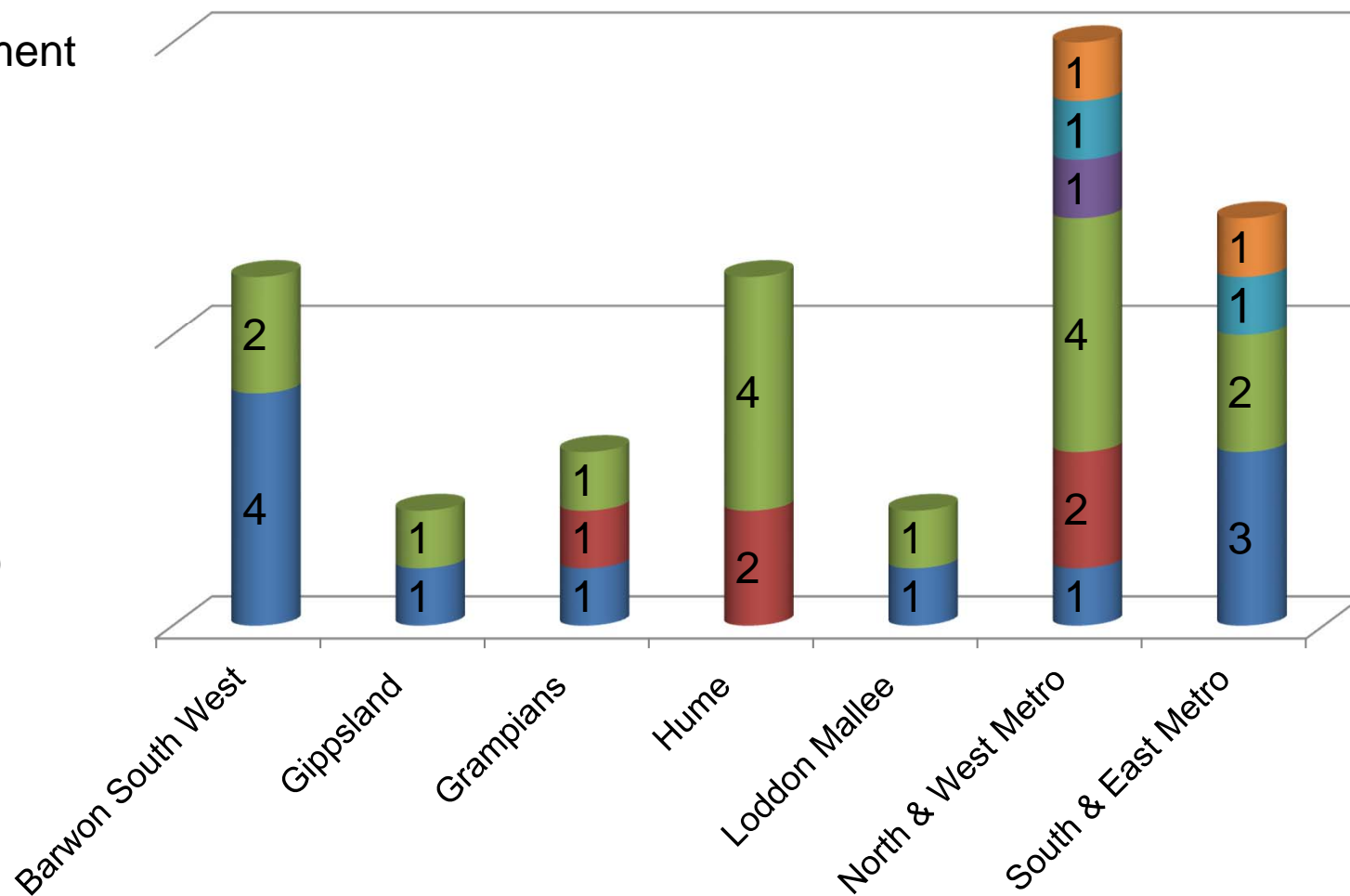


> Excludes state-wide projects which engage very many organisations

> Excludes Workforce evaluation survey to be distributed to 60 orgs received grants/traineeships: 17 ACCHOs, 31 hospitals or integrated health services, 12 community health

Organisations directly engaged, by region

- Local government
- CHS
- NGO
- Hospital
- PCP
- ACCHO



Key benefits of prioritising



- **Depth – meaningful practice insights**
- **The right consultants for the right tasks**
- **Faster insights for earlier dissemination, and action!**

Dissemination Maximizing use of the Findings



- **Publishing and presenting 'anticipated' evaluation findings since midway through evaluations**
 - Expert advisory group
 - Department Executives
 - Draft Workplan – not dissemination but proposed actions
- **Dissemination is passive: “Maximising use of the findings”**
- **Marlene Laubli-Loud’s “valorisation”**
- **Shared responsibility of:
evaluator + commissioner + evaluand/program area**
- **Active role for commissioner**

Tips



**Dont be scared of incomplete information when planning ...
a governance group can support / challenge/ test decisions.**

Don't just plan for dissemination > Design for Action!

Go early with findings! Keep the momentum up!

- Words are your friend here: learn to say things that are genuine and meaningful without being committal and conclusive!

Resource management of commissioned evaluations:

- average 1 day/week - more at beginning and end
- early findings approach – needs extra resources short-term

Contracting evaluators – comms, analysis & writing skills

- ask every key person on team for eg of their personally written final reports or similar.....



Keeping it Simple

Lessons from the Australia Africa Community Engagement Scheme

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What was AACES?

- DFAT-funded partnership program – 5 years – \$83M.
- Implemented by 10 Australian NGOs and their in-country partners through individual projects.
- 11 countries in Africa with varying contexts.
- Diverse sectors: water and sanitation, maternal and child health, food security, gender based violence and women's rights, disability inclusion, etc.

Lessons from the past

- In the previous program, APAC the expected project outcomes, and standards for M&E were not clear.
- No cohesive narrative about what the program was achieving. This was a missed opportunity.
- Difficult for the program to be evaluated.
- Too much **complexity** – not enough **clarity**.

What did we do differently

- Developed clear and agreed program-level outcomes, and a core set of sectoral indicators.
- Defined clear expectations for program and project level M&E.
- Developed all reporting templates up front (including for MTR).
- Gave NGOs flexibility to have diverse approaches.
- Facilitated peer reviews at design, and 10 months into implementation.
- Resourced collaborative research.

What were the benefits

- Clarity
 - Clear expectations (and participatory processes) helped to **build trust** between DFAT and the NGOs (and between the NGOs).
 - Led to shared **research, learning and innovation**.
 - High quality of evidence collected by the NGOs – baselines, data on value for money.
- Coherence
 - The program was able to be evaluated – there was a **coherent narrative** across the program (e.g. about how women's lives were changing), as well as the unique stories.
 - Ability to tell a story – useful for advocacy.
 - The M&E system was given the highest rating over the life of the program in DFAT's quality assurance system, and by independent reviewers.

Is this Australia's best ever NGO program?

10 NGOs • 11 countries • 2.3 million lives improved

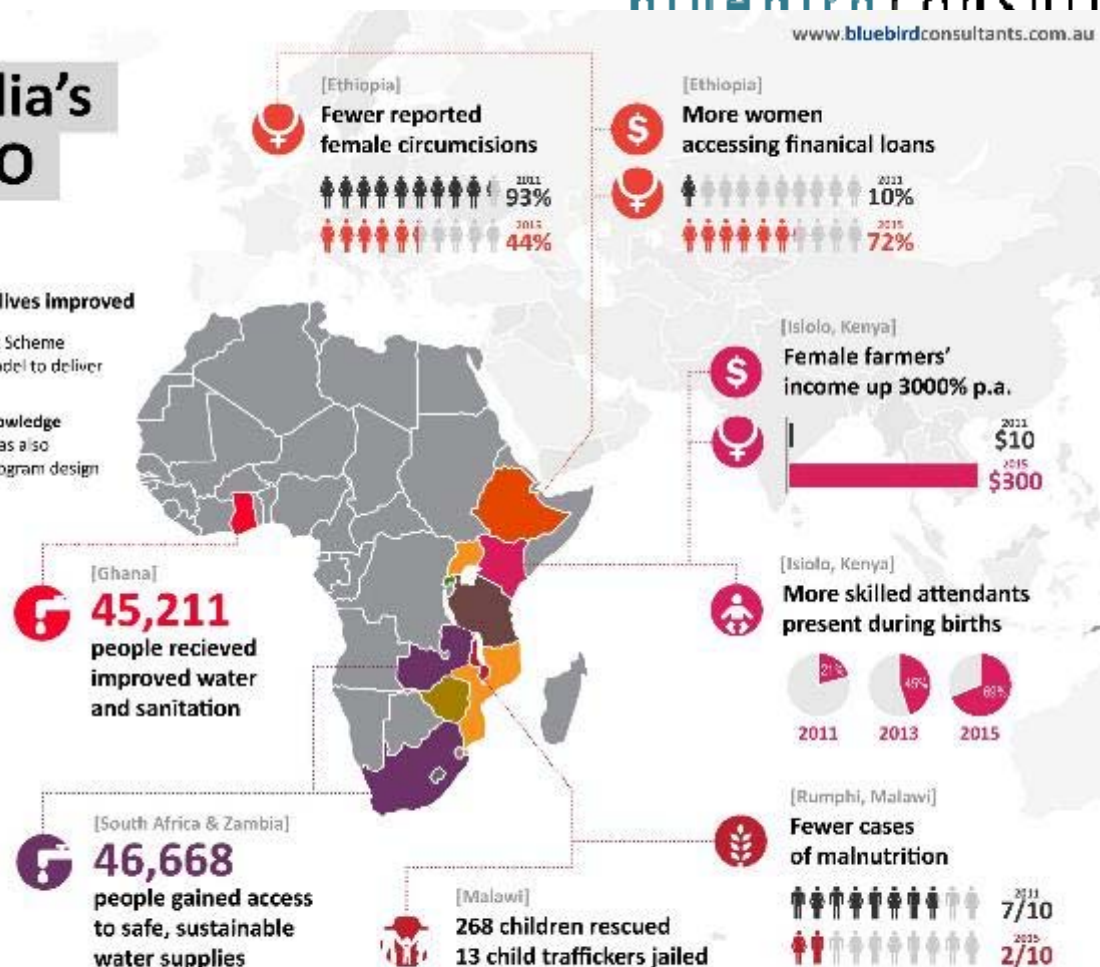
The Australia Africa Community Engagement Scheme (AACES) represented a new, collaborative model to deliver foreign aid programs.

This was a genuine partnership in which knowledge sharing and innovation flourished. AACES was also underpinned by substantial investment in program design and best practice M&E.

The result was a suite of highly successful programs that delivered outstanding value. For example, by targeting women with poor access to sexual health services, an estimated 260,000 unintended pregnancies will be prevented across Kenya and Tanzania. That means a saving of around \$421 million in healthcare costs.

Elsewhere, over 14,000 people with disability benefited from new support services. And thousands of families have been empowered by programs that helped them increase and diversify their income.

Most importantly, AACES' programs were engineered to create lasting change. By working with local and district governments as well as the private sector, NGOs created systems that will continue to improve people's lives into the future.



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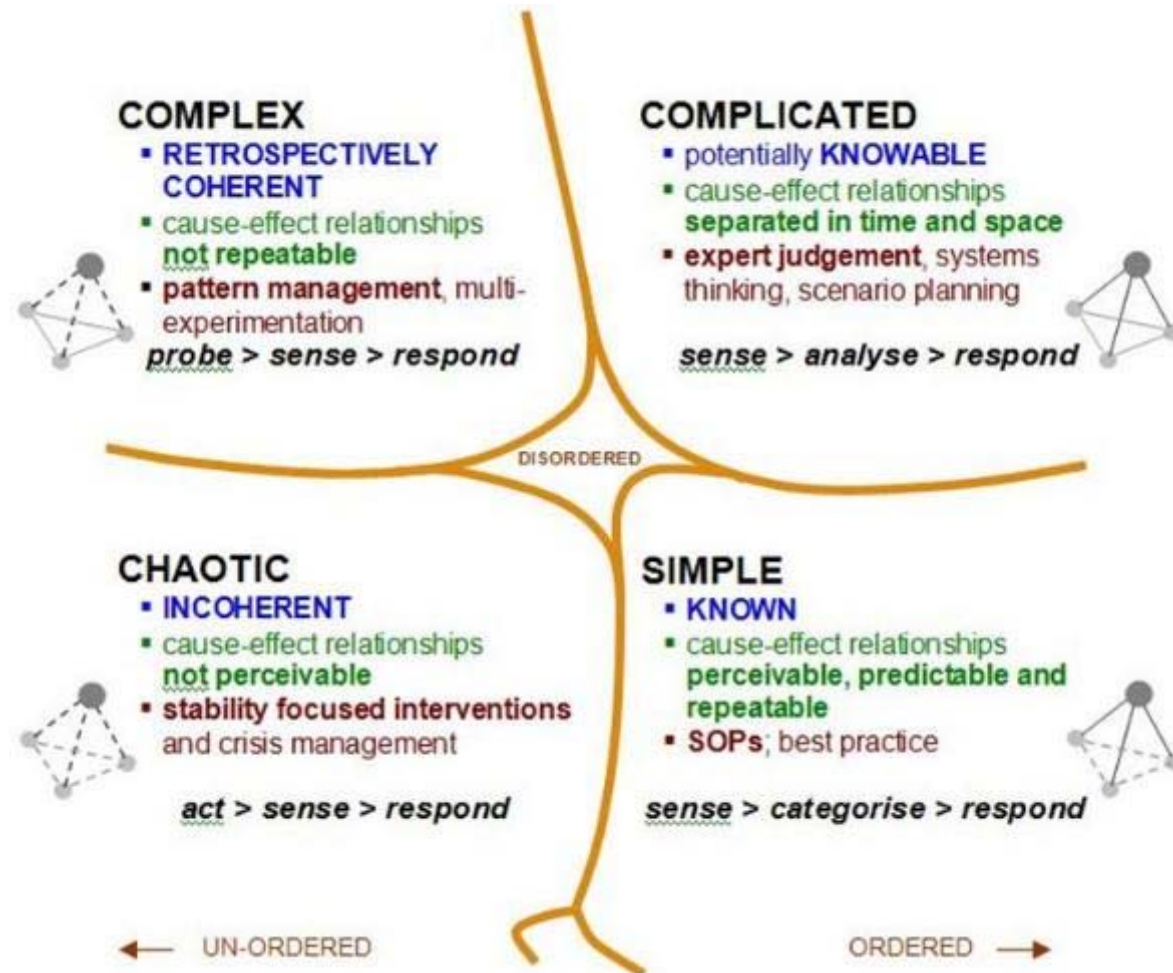
TIPS

- **Resource M&E design within program design processes** - Include evaluative thinking (defining clear agreed outcomes, defining expected standards, building evaluative capacity) to reap enormous dividends both for program effectiveness, and for the ability to demonstrate effectiveness.
- **Start by thinking about the story you want to be able to tell at the end** - When designing an M&E system for a complex program - keep the end in mind (don't get lost in the complexity). What is the story you want to be able to tell at the end? How can you design the program outcomes, M&E arrangements, and reporting templates at project and program levels to tell this story?
- **Review the M&E systems in the early stages of implementation** – Don't wait until the mid-point to find problems. Facilitating an M&E System Review (e.g. through a strengths based peer review) helps to build understanding and trust, ensures implementers keep their eye on the M&E ball by resourcing baselines and getting M&E frameworks finalised, and can identify opportunities for collaboration in M&E and research.

Complex knowledge needs require
profoundly simple knowledge
brokering

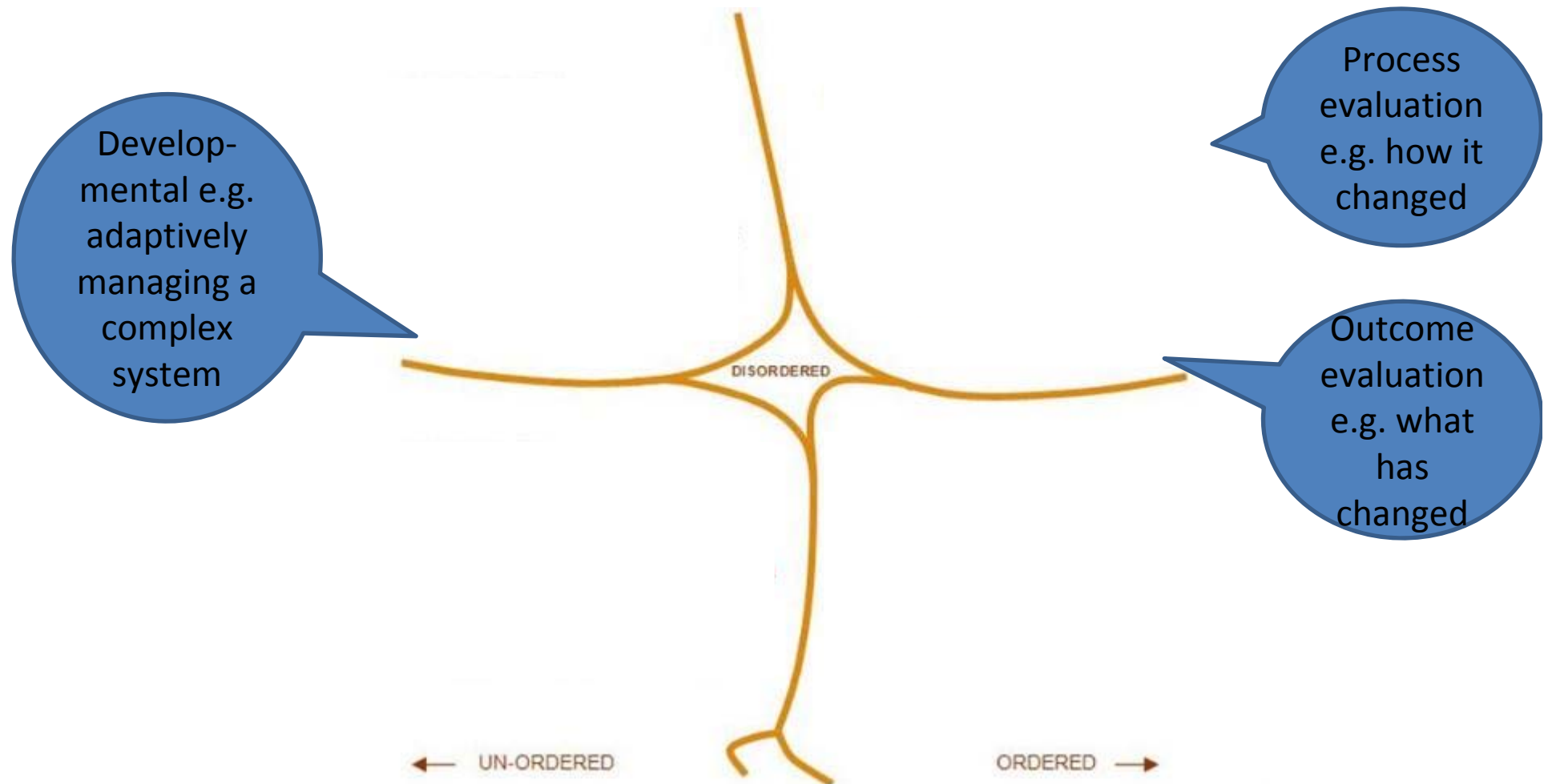
Stefan Kaufman
EPA Victoria

Cynefin framework



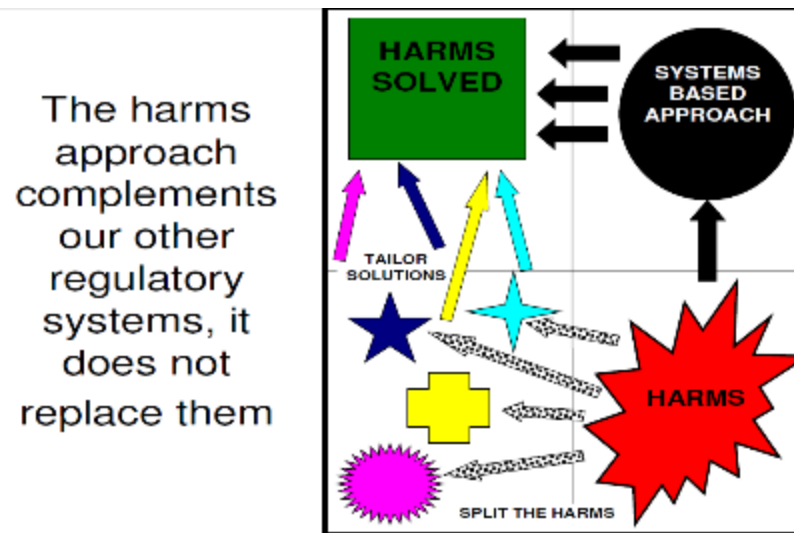
After David Snowden
<http://cognitive-edge.com/>

Know your evaluand and plan accordingly....



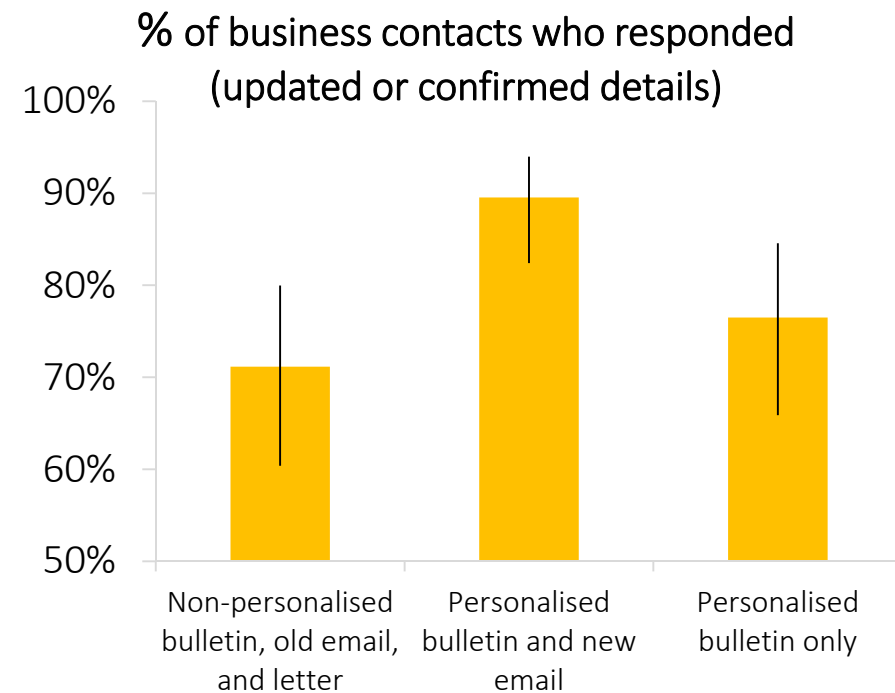
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Handle simple needs simply, and complicated needs... simply.



Source: Malcolm K Sparrow, John F Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University

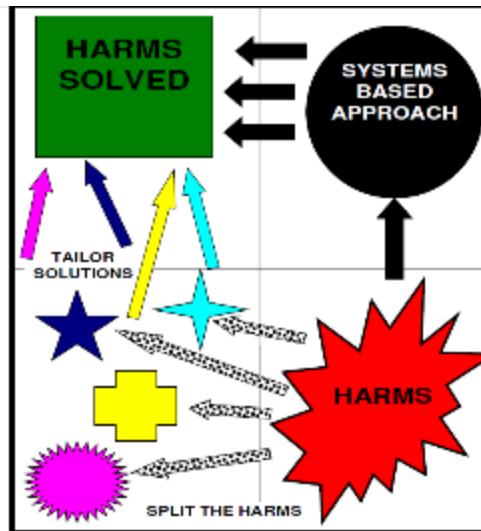
Figure 4 Applying the right tool to the right problem



Error bars represent 95% confidence intervals

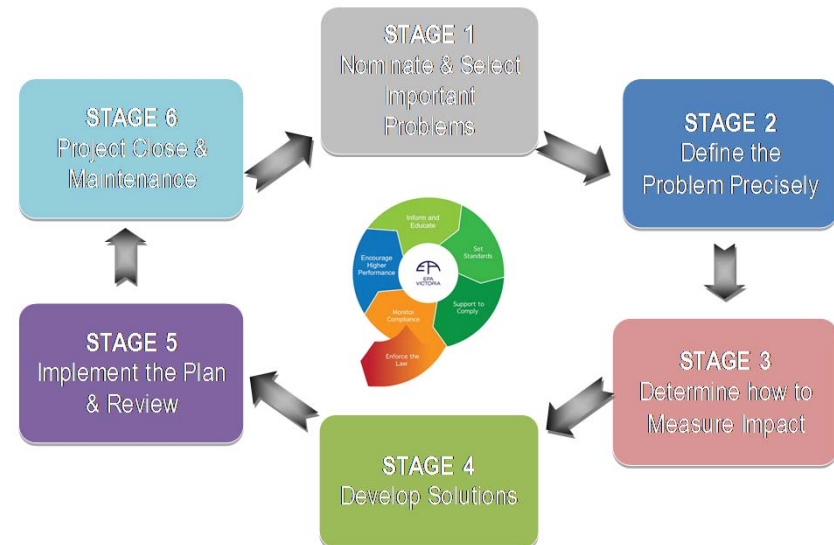
And complex situations, adaptively.

The harms approach complements our other regulatory systems, it does not replace them



Source: Malcolm K Sparrow, John F Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University

Figure 4 Applying the right tool to the right problem



Be across complicated programs, but describe them simply.

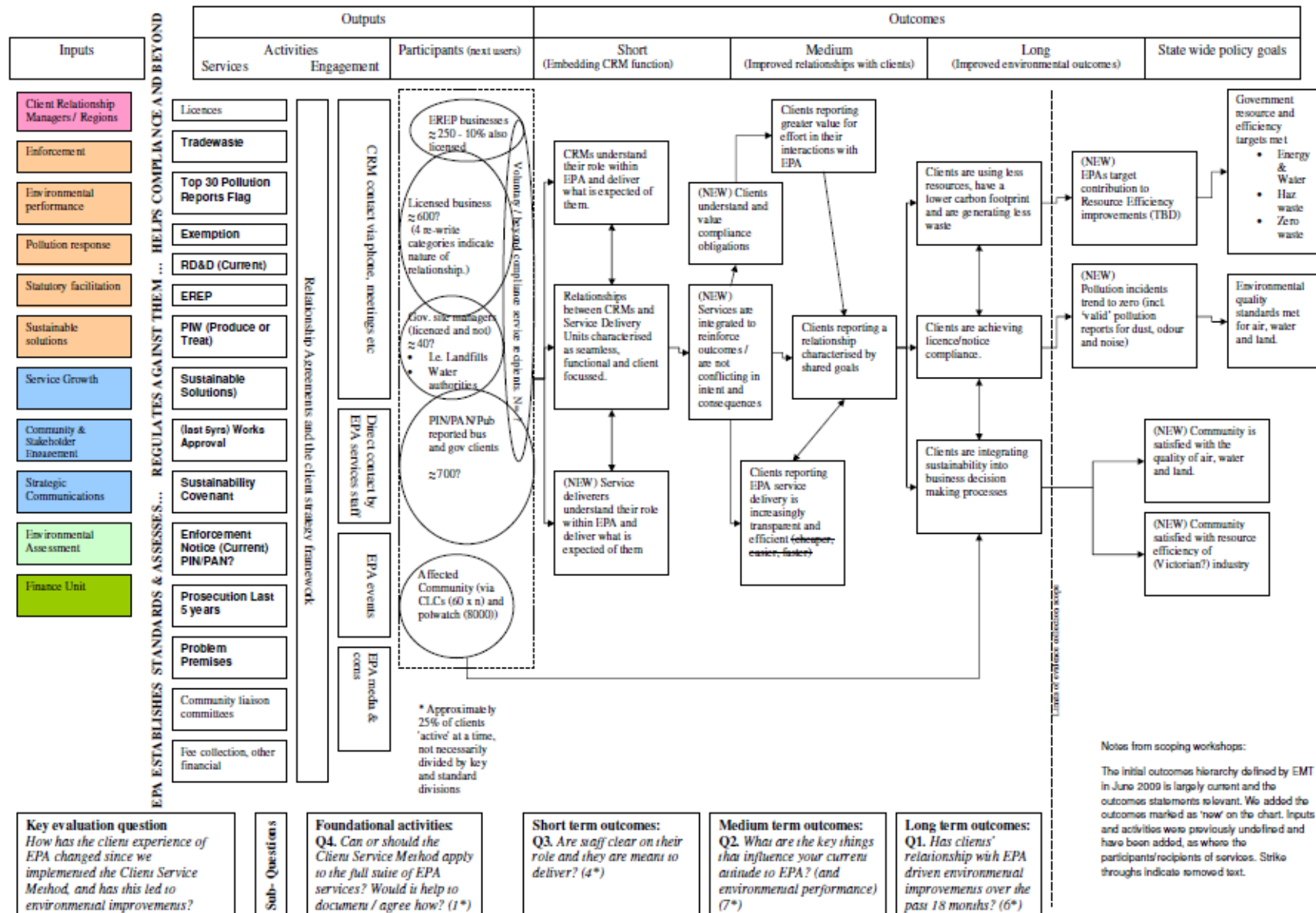
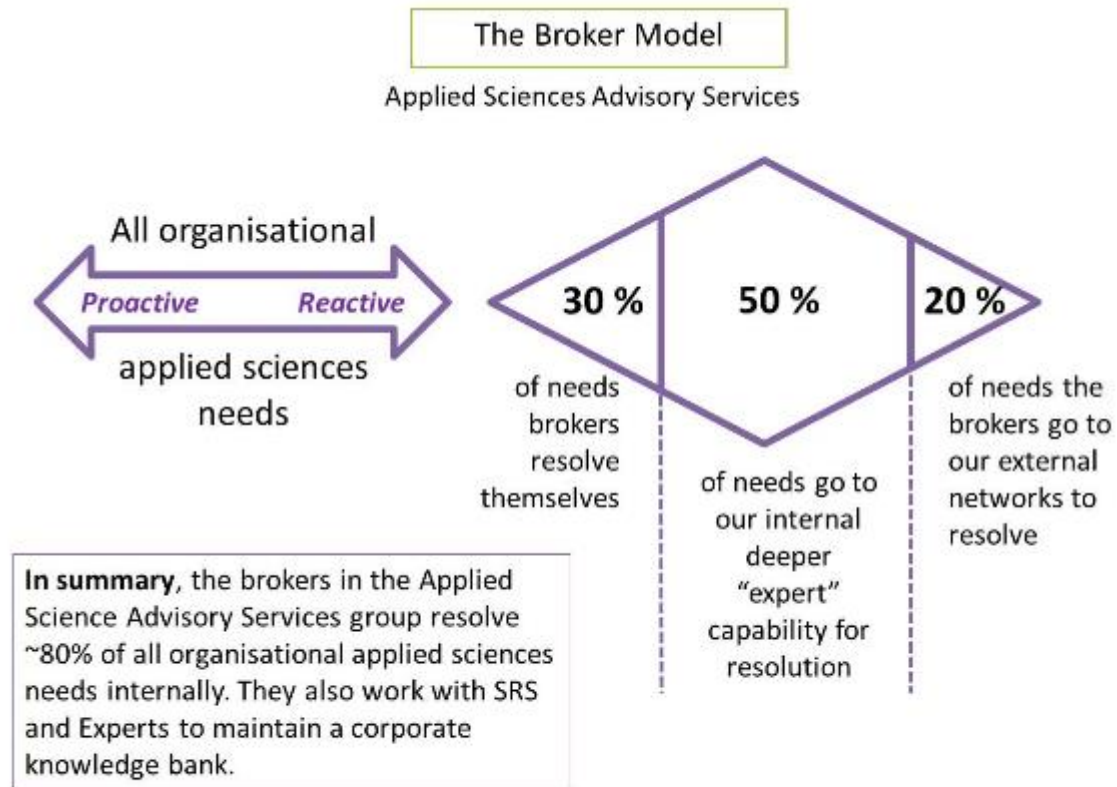
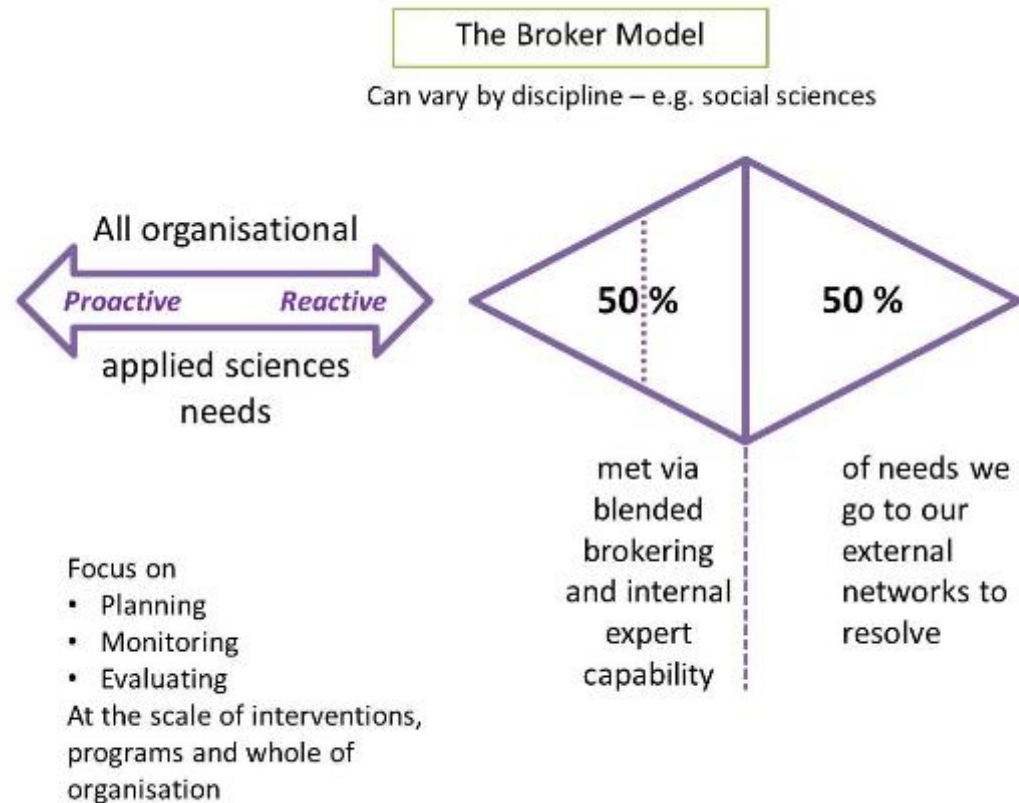


Figure 1: Outcomes hierarchy and evaluation questions for EPA Client Service Method

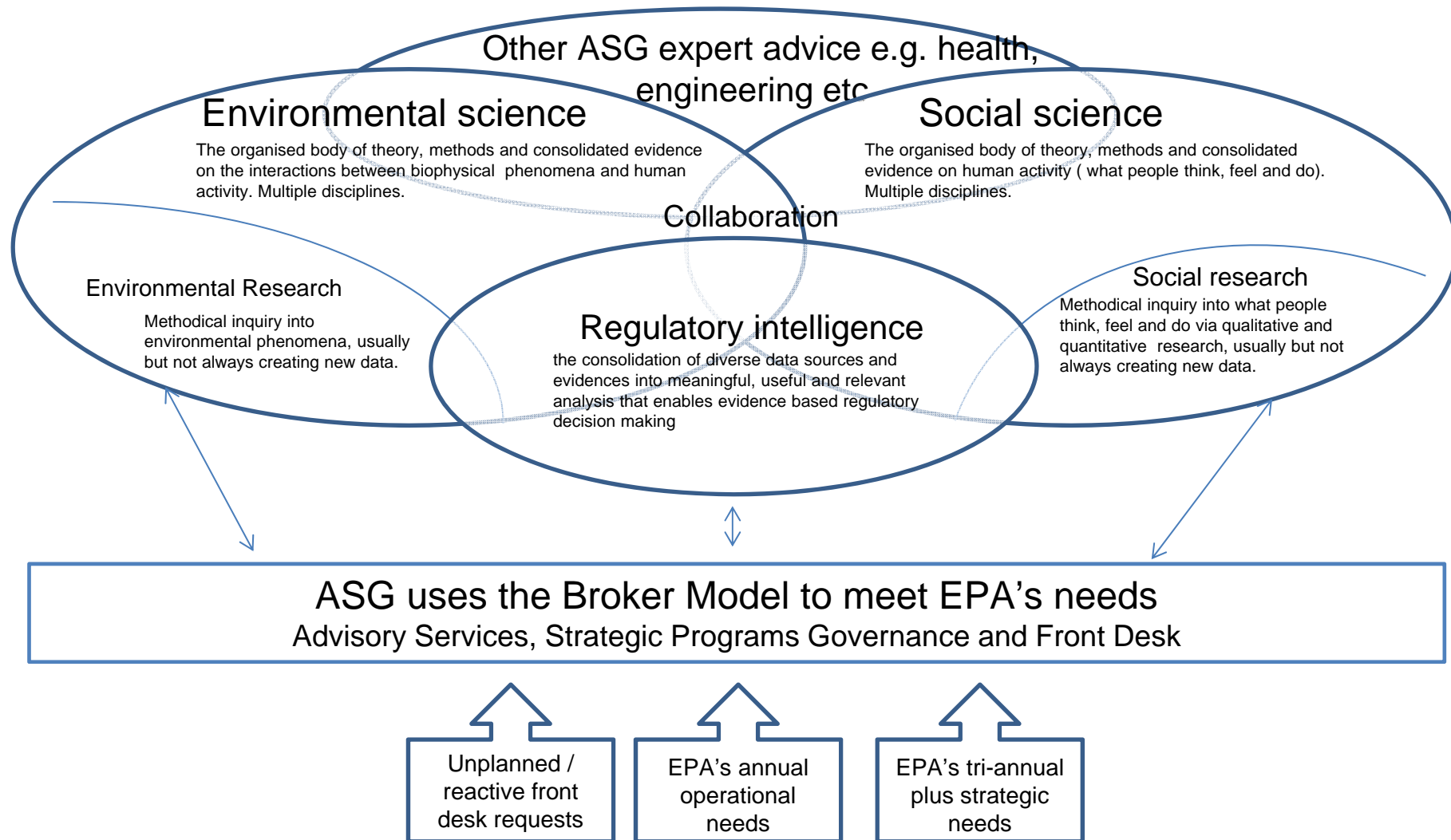
You need internal experts



...and also to leverage their expertise



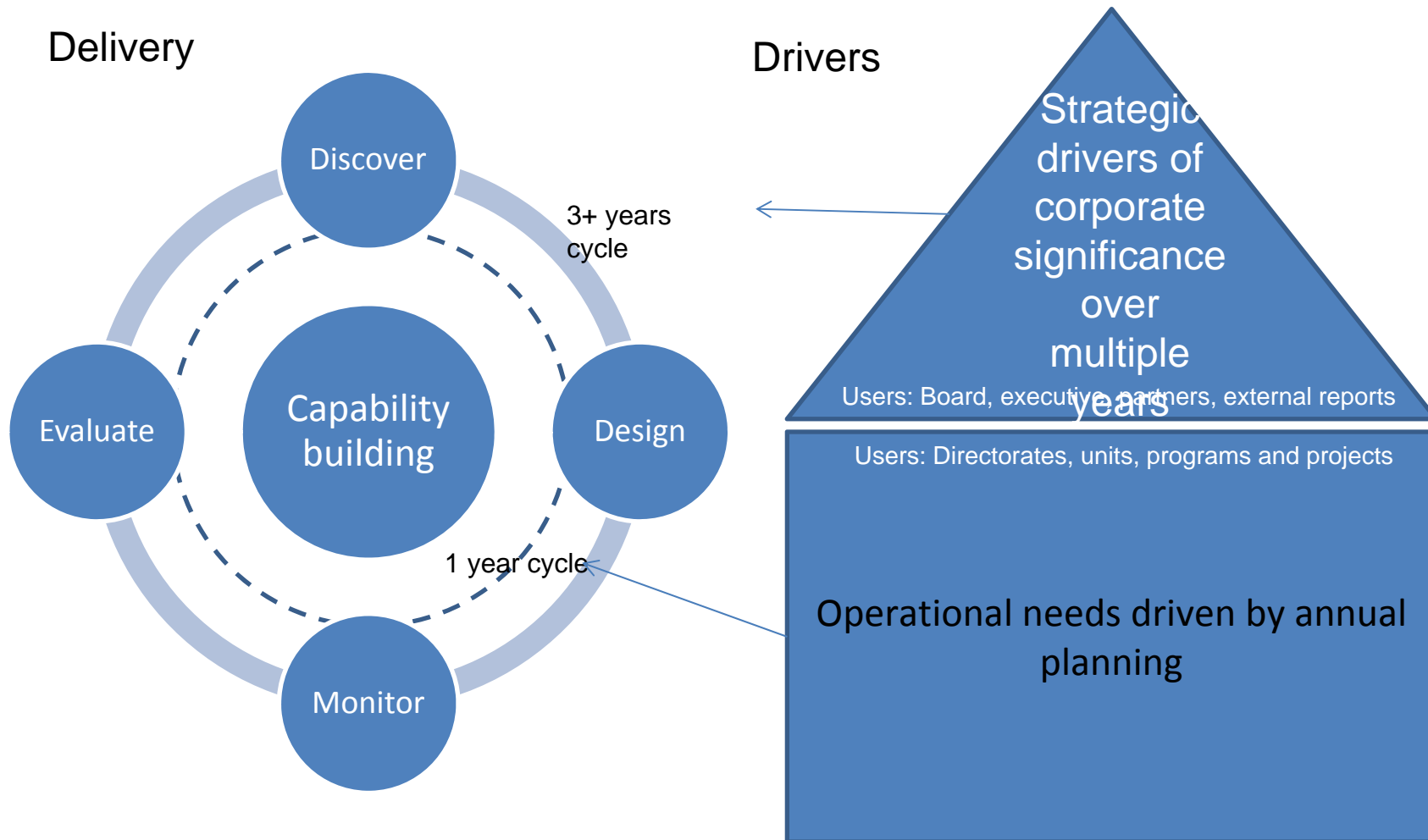
Need to collaborate across silos for both planned and reactive work



Offer a portfolio of products and services, but know where they fi

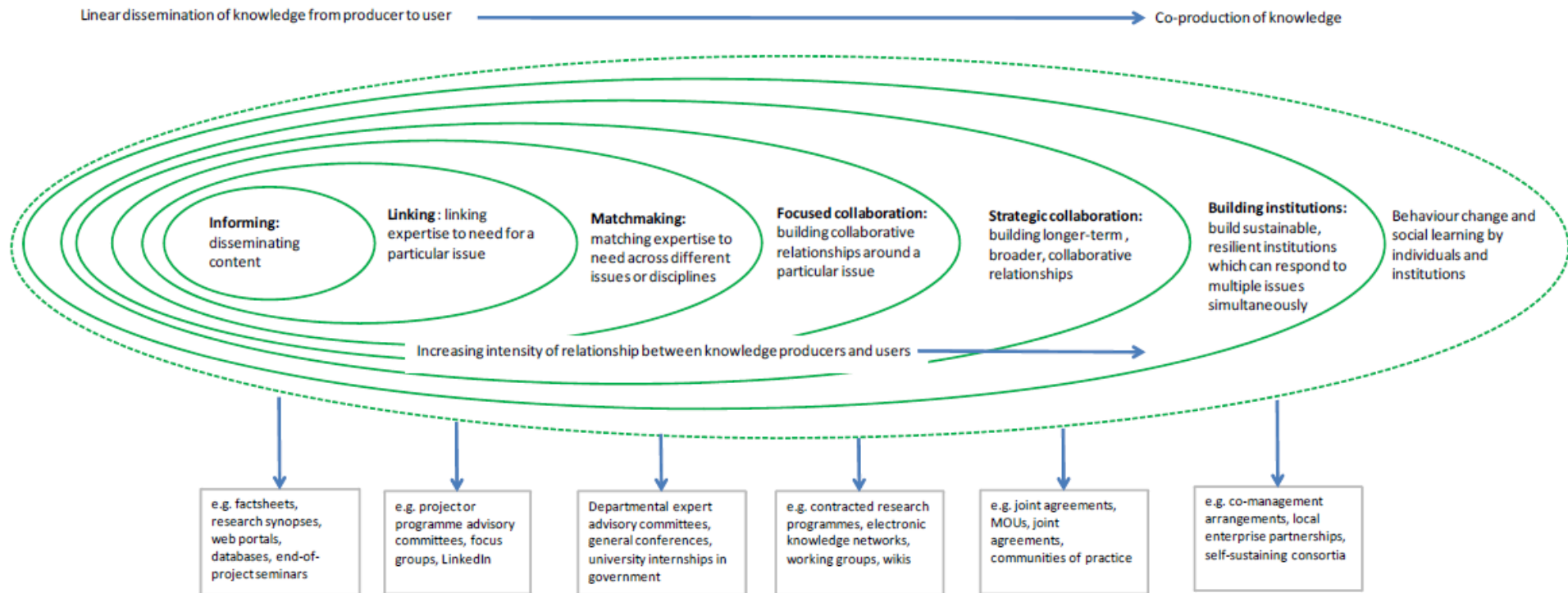
EPA needs	Example products and services	How staff can use them

Identify and meet knowledge needs at multiple scales



Long term collaborations span a range of knowledge needs

The six functions of knowledge brokering



Adapted from Michaels, S 2009: Matching knowledge brokering strategies to environmental policy problems and settings. *Environmental Science and Policy* 12 (2009): 994-1011.

Catherine Fisher et al

[Knowledge Brokering and Intermediary concepts discussion Summary.pdf](#)

... and also share contexts and challenges





Evaluations of complex programs and strategies

- tips from us



Evaluations of complex programs and strategies

- tips from you

We'd love to keep talking and learning from each other.

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