

CENTRE
for **SOCIAL**
IMPACT

PROBLEM-SOLVING ETHICS

Weaving resources and strategies
into navigating ethics in Evaluation



WORKSHOP— AES-22

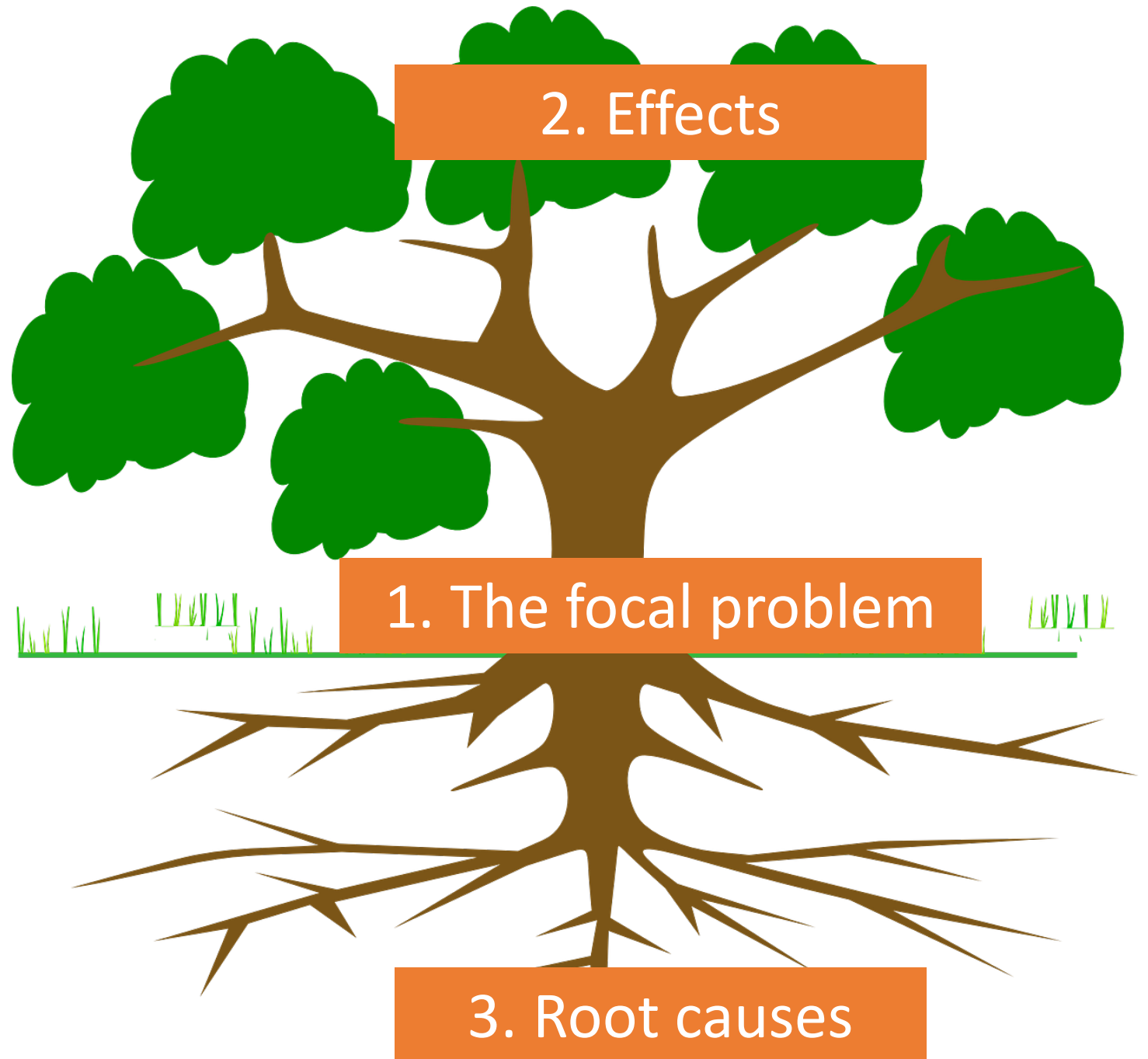




Background

- AES Ethics presentations – FestEVAL – 13 Sep 2021
 - 5 presentations on different aspects with case studies
- Follow-up discussion – FestEVAL – 15 Sep 2021
 - Discussed situations and problems
 - Content and thematic analysis of Jamboard
- **Today is** about coming up with actionable solutions to weave into our practice

Problem Tree Analysis





1. Focal Problem

Ethical challenges to our evaluation practice

- Ethical guidelines address only a small part
- Ethical approval processes are not routine
- Lack of agreement about what it is, why it is important
- It is not clear what we should be doing about it
- We know there are important conversations about ethics we are not having



2. The effects

On evaluation practice and the profession overall

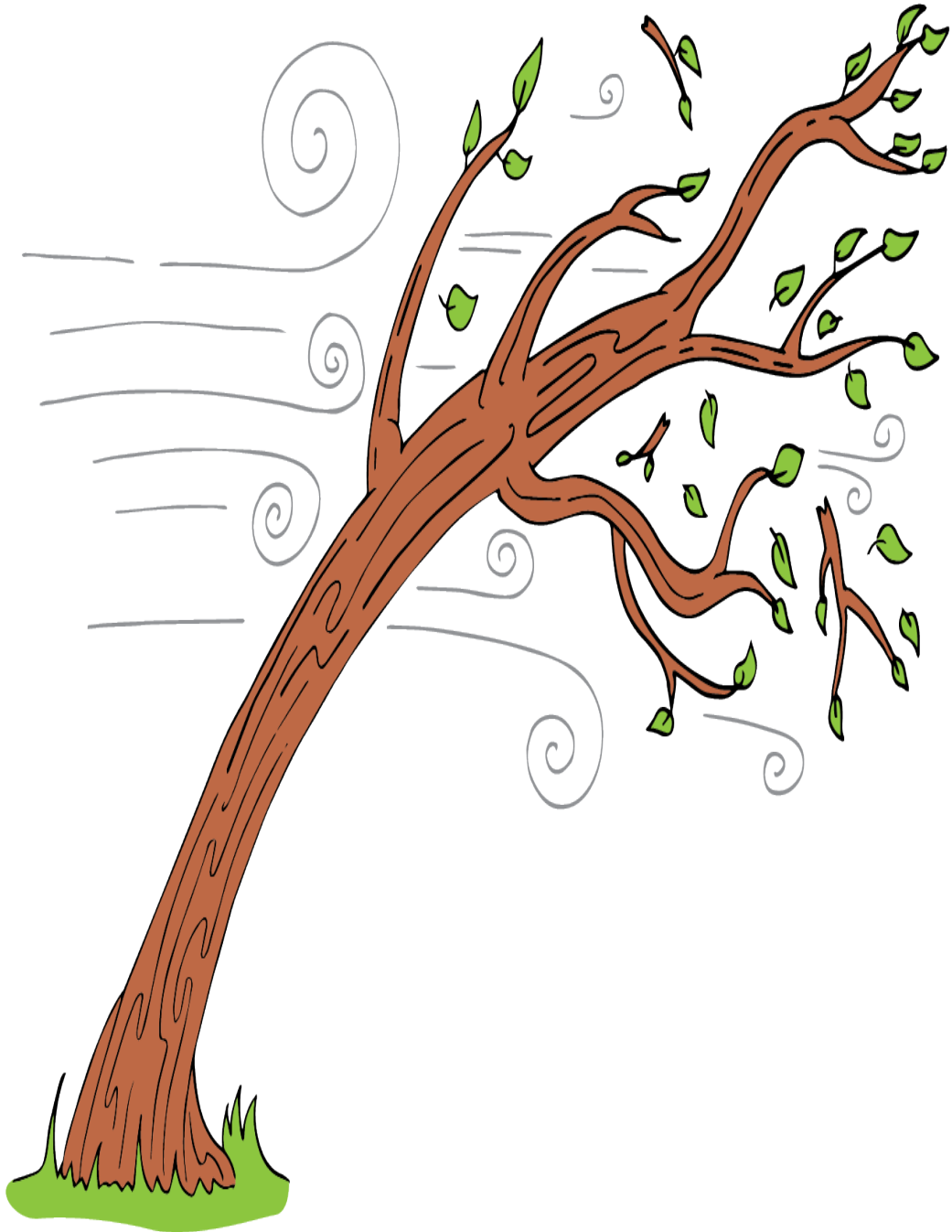
- Sometimes we end up using methods and processes that are ethically questionable
- As evaluators we are taking *unnecessary* risks for others (and ourselves)
- Our processes and results favour some stakeholders over others (e.g. commissioners)
- Findings and implementation of recommendations based on findings can be substantially biased and lack transparency



3. The causes

Evaluation work is complex and different from research

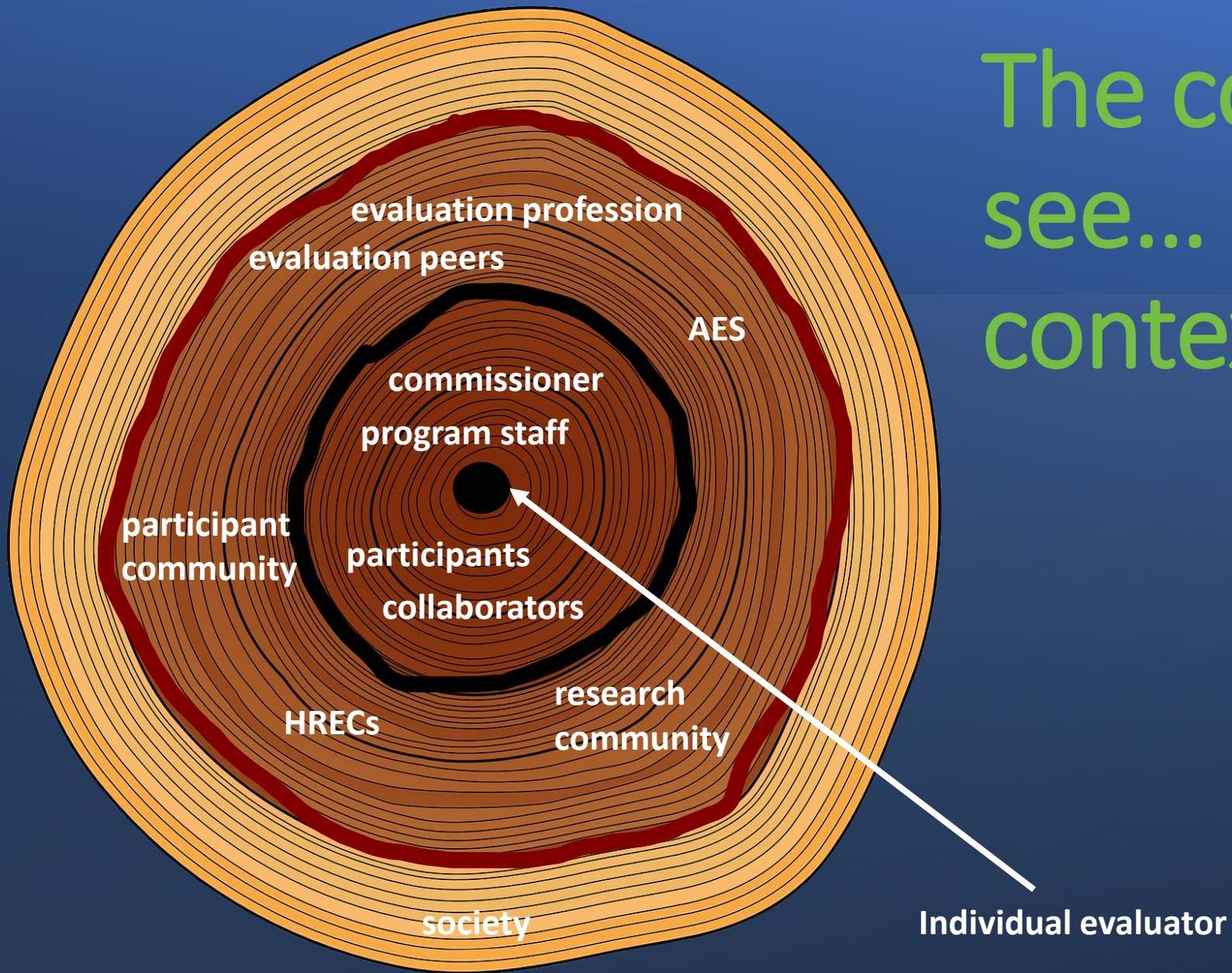
- Nature of evaluation work is complex, broad, and boundaries uncertain (independence impacted)
- Shorter time frames and smaller gap between findings and implementation
- Lack of time and space for ethical consideration
- Power imbalances (e.g. The power of the commissioner and preference for positive findings)
- Less accountability to peers/experts (e.g. less peer review and publication compared to research)
- HREC processes of review are not an ideal fit to evaluation



How this plays out in evaluation practice

- Ethics is not part of the contract (no time or money), so we commonly get “nasty surprises”
- Those in power (with the money) can set the evaluation agenda at the loss of independence and rigour
- Boundaries of the evaluator are challenged by stakeholder relationships
 - E.g. “Buddy versus threat” Whose buddy?
 - E.g. Competing stakeholder agendas
- Bias in findings
 - E.g. positive findings anticipated by a commissioner
 - E.g. findings linked to funding opportunities
- Disregard findings
 - E.g. when negative findings emerge they are dealt with politically by the commissioner

The context we
see... and the
context we miss?



Finding Practical strategies using systems analysis

What is a practical strategy?

Things we can do in our next evaluation project (or even our current one!)



A systems analysis template

PRACTICAL SOLUTIONS FOR EVALUATOR ETHICS - USING SYSTEMS ANALYSIS



THE ETHICAL PROBLEM BEING ADDRESSED	
SYSTEM LEVEL	PRACTICAL STRATEGIES EVALUATORS CAN TAKE USING RESOURCES ACROSS ALL 4 LEVELS
1 INDIVIDUAL EVALUATORS	
2 IMMEDIATE EVALUATION STAKEHOLDERS	
Commissioner Program staff Participants Collaborators	
3 PROFESSION STAKEHOLDERS AND PARTICIPANT COMMUNITY	
Evaluation profession Evaluation peers Participant community HRECs Research community	
4 BROADER SOCIETY	



Our Activity

- Read the case study
- Working in small groups
 - Start with **one ethical problem** you have identified from the case study
 - Put yourself in the position of the evaluation team. Use the template to find **practical strategies** that you can implement now and/or in a repeat situation by focusing on each of the four levels of the system
 - Report back on the problem identified and one strategy



Resources from the outer circle

- Evaluation professional standards
- AES ethical guidelines
- AES Cultural Safety Framework
- NHMRC National Statement Indigenous Research Guidelines
- HRECs processes
- Productivity Commission documents
- Evaluation professional standards
- Peer review and support
- Peer-reviewed publication
- Publication of the evaluation report
- Distribution of report to participants and participant communities



Wrap up

- Reflections from today
- Next steps
 - Collation of potential solutions, strategies
 - How we keep the conversation going

Thank you!