

Theory of Change

For DPME, Presidency, RSA
WELCOME !!

Southern Hemisphere

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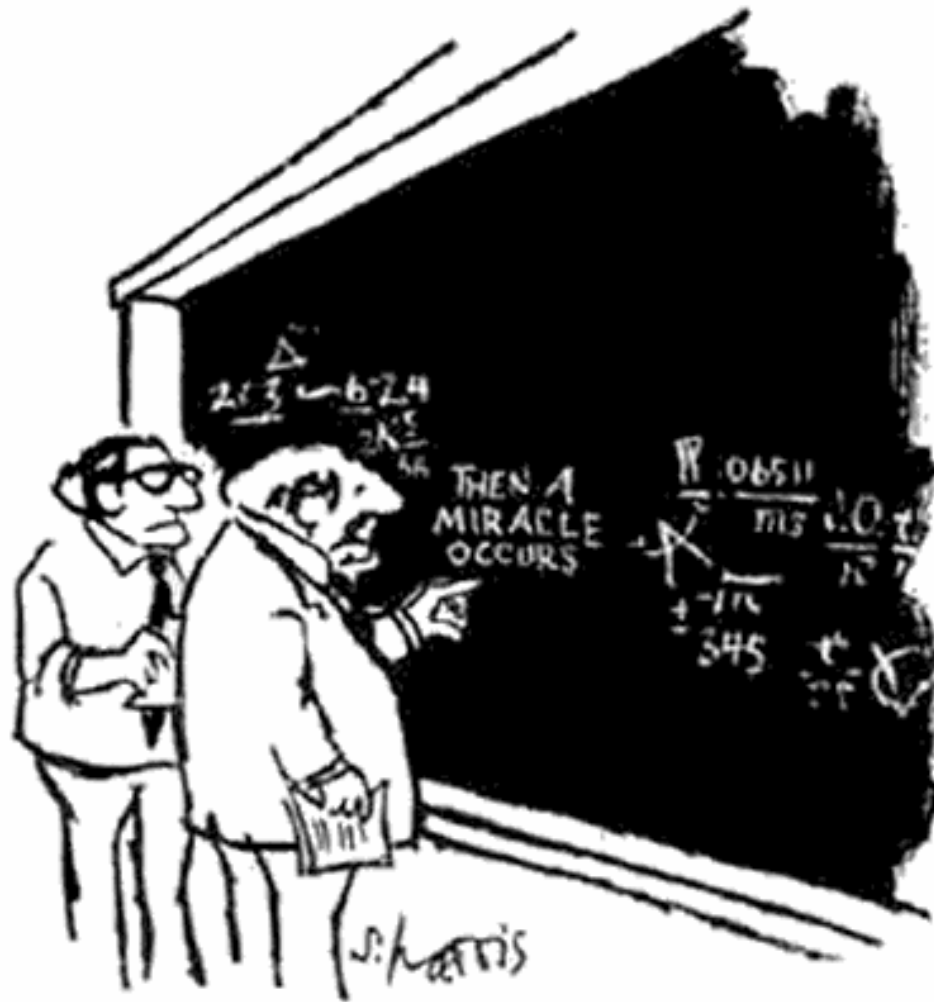
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"I THINK YOU SHOULD BE MORE EXPLICIT
HERE IN STEP TWO."

© 1995, 1979-1981 J. K. Harris

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■ Theory of change

An approach to the design & evaluation of
social programmes



Agenda

- Purpose of workshop
- Context for TOC in government evaluations
- What is TOC? (Product)
- Defining your TOC (Process)
- Communicating your TOC



■ Key objective

- Assist with the retrospective development of a theory of change to inform evaluations of government programmes

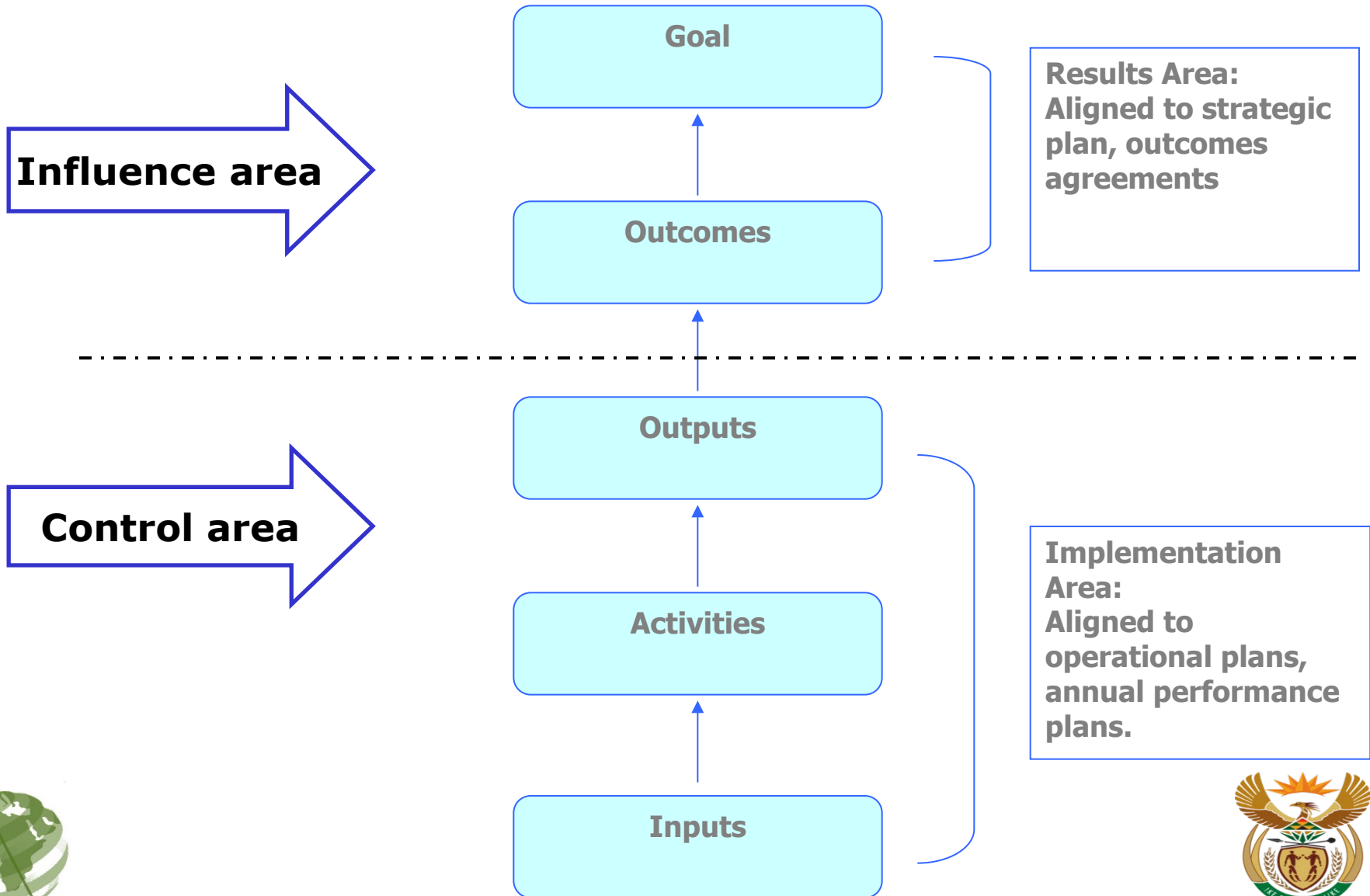


Context

- The outcomes system in government (Ian, what slides do you have to explain this?)



Results based



Why the movement towards ToC?

- ToC tries to track more closely *how, why and in what context* activities are connected to outcomes (causality)
- Tries to capture the complexity of programmes
 - Multiple pathways of change
 - Assumptions about the programme, context and theory



Why the movement towards ToC?

Reducing cases of domestic violence through mandatory arrests

The intention was to reduce repeat assault through mandatory arrests. Police officers were randomly provided with three possible interventions: 1) they would arrest perpetrator even if he was not charged; 2) they would provide advice or 3) they would send the perpetrator away. The research showed that there was a significantly lower rate of repeat calls/reports for domestic violence in the group where mandatory arrests were used as the measure, thus “proving” that arrest leads to a reduction in domestic violence. Based on the research findings, other cities were encouraged to adopt the policy on mandatory arrests and the use of this policy rapidly grew across the US. However, follow up studies showed that in some cases mandatory arrests increased the risk of repeat offense of domestic violence. Upon analysing this, it became apparent that community, employment and family structures had mediated the outcomes achieved. *“In stable communities with high rates of employment arrests produces shame on the part of the perpetrator who is then less likely to reoffend...in less stable communities with high rates of unemployment arrest is liable to trigger anger on the part of the perpetrator who is liable to become more violent”*.



What is theory based evaluation?

- An evaluation that seeks to make the theory of change explicit and...
- **Use** this to guide the evaluation:
 - What should be measure: process, outcomes, context
 - Evaluation questions
 - Identify breakdowns in pathways of change
 - Use evaluation to strengthen theory



Standards for Evaluation in Government

- A good evaluation should *"describe & assess the intervention logic or theory, including underlying assumptions and factors affecting the success of the intervention."*
 - ToC should be communicated effectively
 - Evaluation should be designed based on ToC
 - Evaluation conclusions should be drawn on the ToC



So how can a TOC help with evaluation?

- Having a clear ToC and ToA will help us to determine:
 - Are / were we on the right pathway?
 - What helped or hindered us?
 - What have we learned about our programme ?



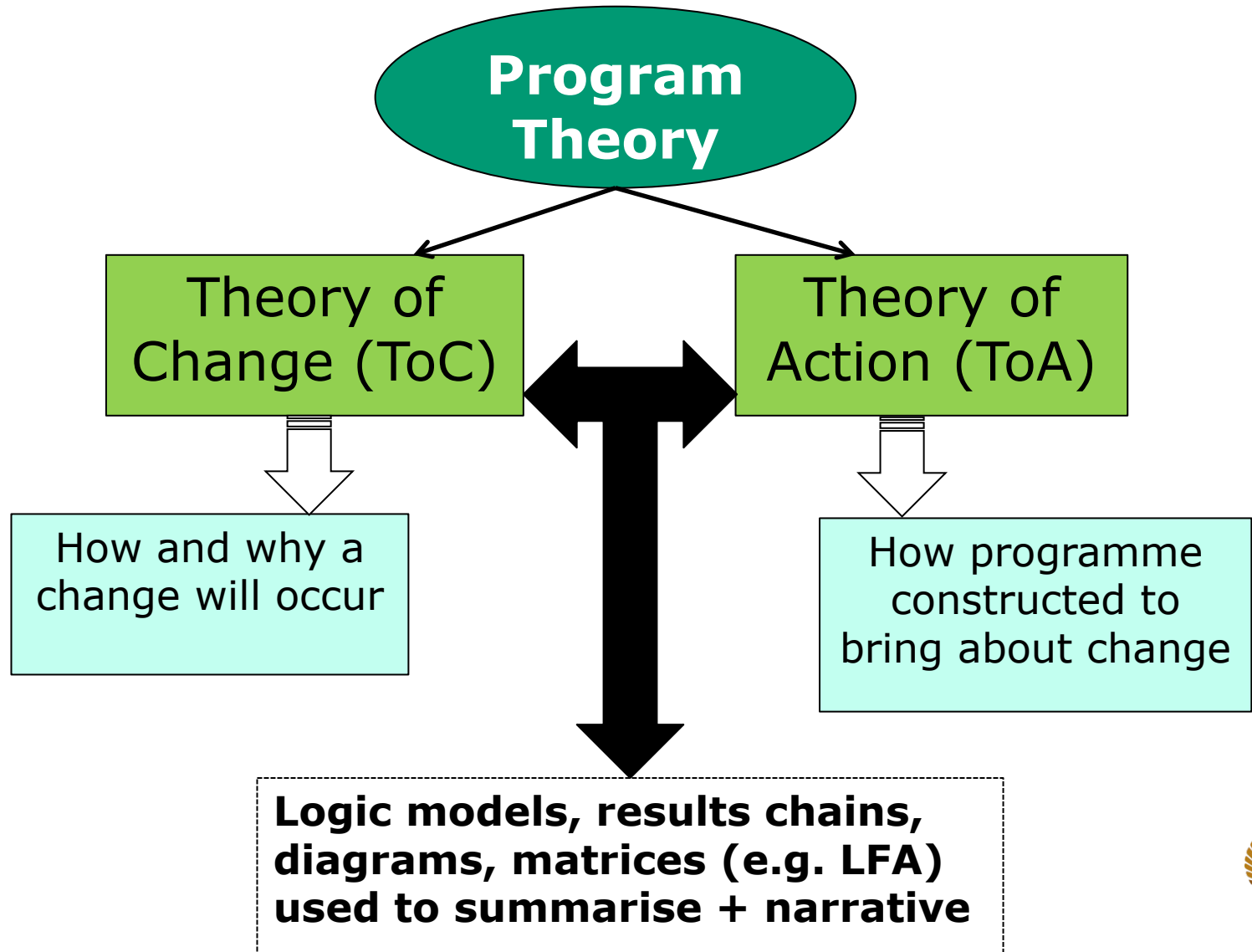
What are some of the terms that you have heard related to theory of change or results based paradigms?



- Theory of change
- Pathways of change
- Logic models
- Outcomes map
- Theory of action
- Results chains



How it fits together...



What is TOC?

- Programme's story of **how** it will make change happen
- An explanation of **why** this change should occur



Most often defined as ...

- The connection between actions & outcomes, with the **explanation** of this connection being the key component of the TOC process
- Social programmes are based on **explicit** theories or assumptions about how and why a programme will work – these must be brought forward.



What informs programme theory?

Practitioner
experience



Academic
theory



Local
knowledge



Theory of change is good for complex programmes

- Complexity recognises that the results of development interventions are:
 - Non-linear, unpredictable
 - Considering different pathways of change



Complexity is understanding that ...

- The world is not predictable
- People behave in ways that we can not predetermine
- People have agency, and we can not control what they do or how they think
- Interventions are part of broader systems and do not take place in isolation of their context



Let's see how ecological system operates, and understand that human systems also work in similar ways – pathways are inter-related

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ysa5OBhXz-Q&noredirect=1>





COMPLEX:

Raising a child is complex, they are unpredictable and you can not control how they think and behave, despite your best intentions.

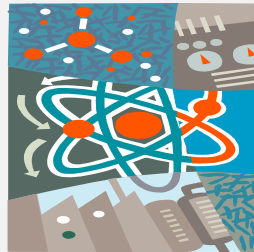
Cause and effect are only coherent in retrospect and do not repeat.



KNOWABLE:

Building a rocket is complicated. But if you have the right skills, follow all the instructions and have the right equipment, you can do it.

Cause and effect separated over time and space.



CHAOS:

The way particles behave in the universe is chaotic. Cataclysmic events such as Tsunamis are chaotic.

No cause and effect relationships perceivable.



KNOWN:

Baking a cake is simple if you follow the instructions exactly, and all your equipment is working, you will get the cake.

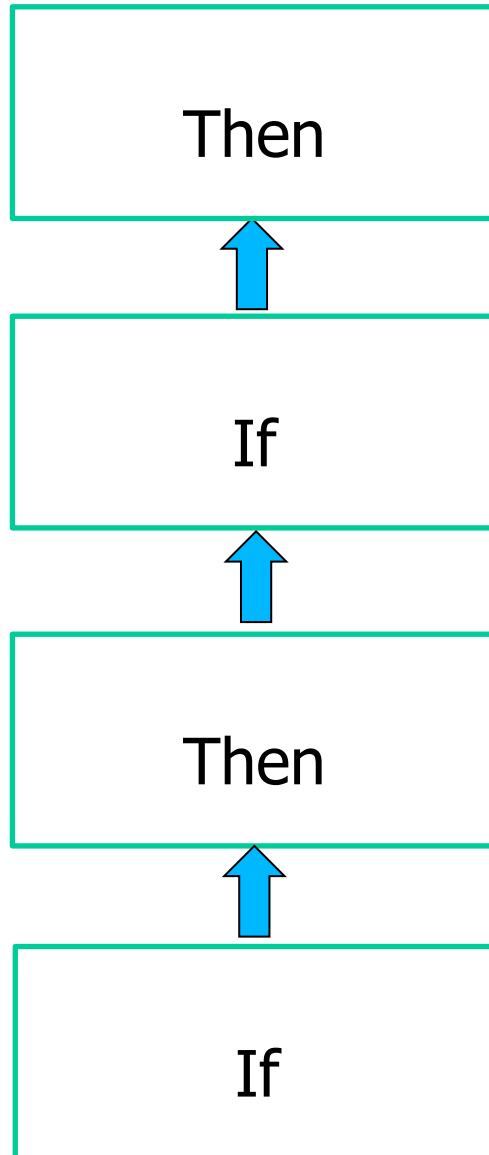
Cause and effect relations repeatable, perceivable and predictable.

Thinking about Change



Typical cause effect chain

what?

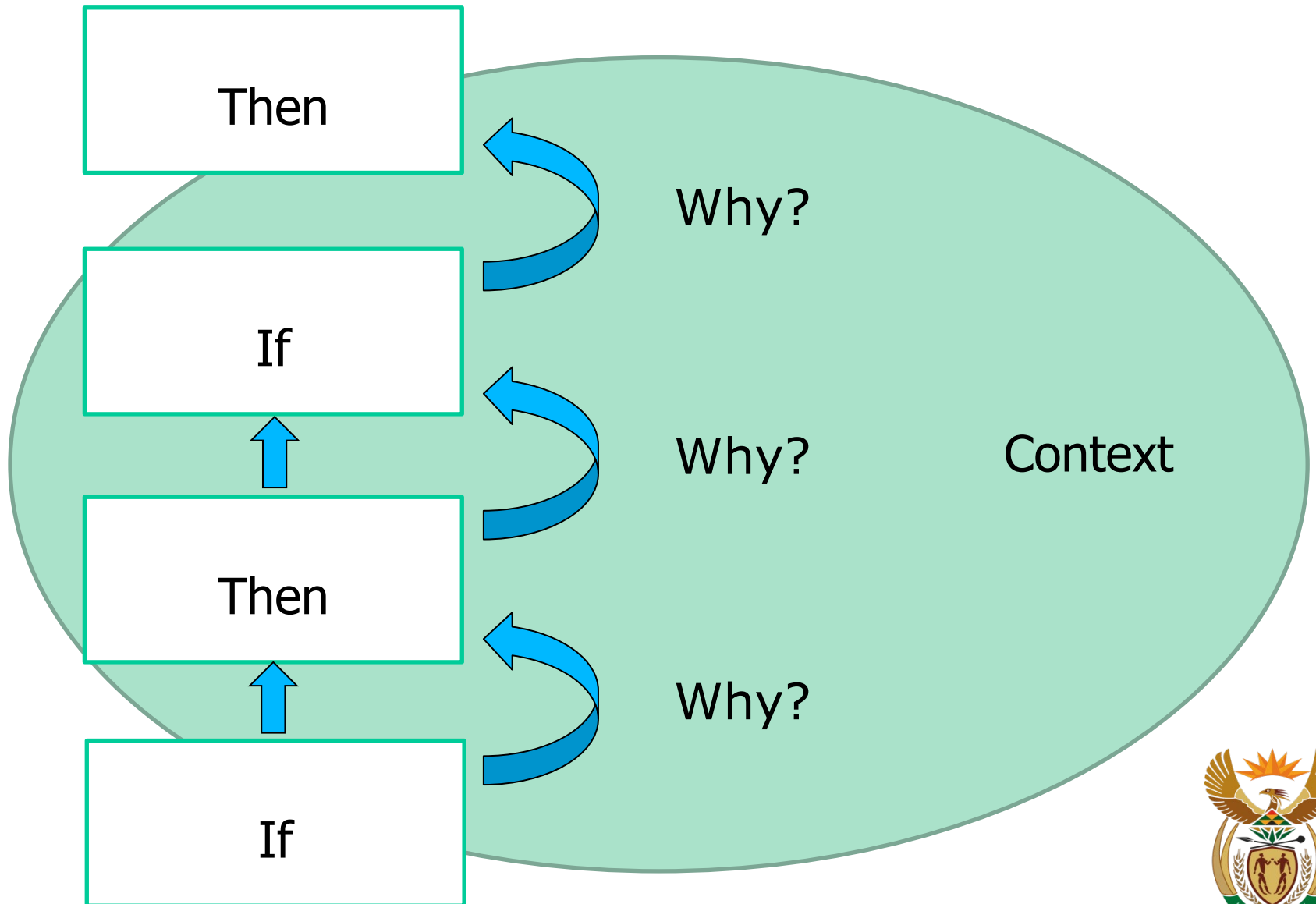


Typical cause effect chain

TOC

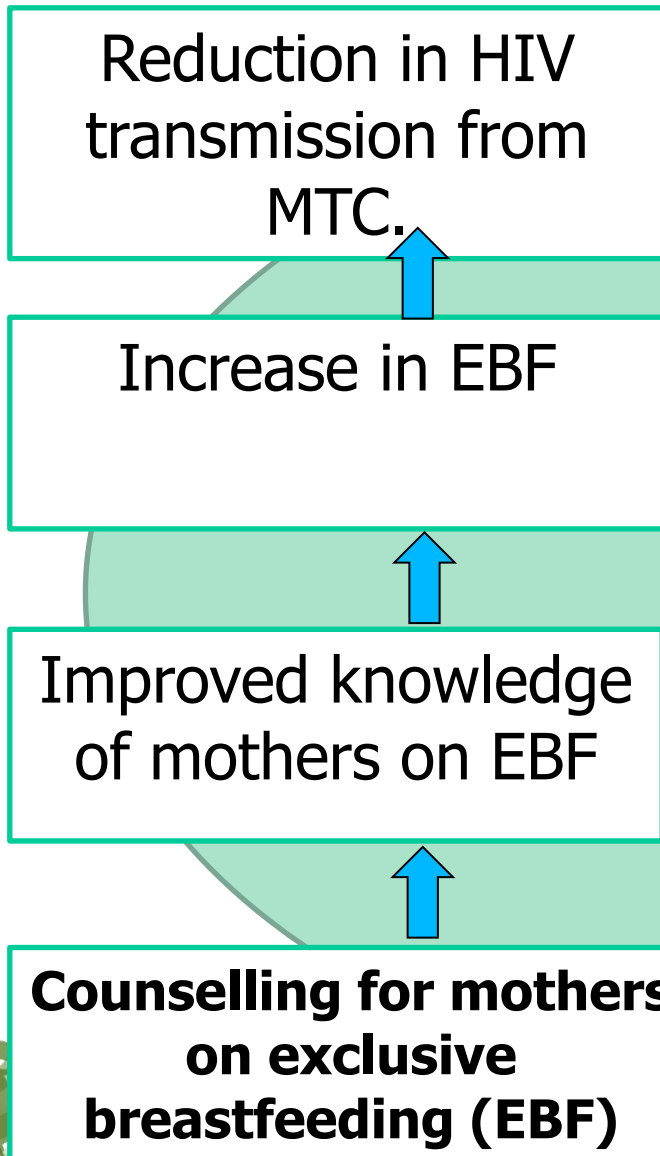
what?

Why ?



Typical cause effect chain

What?



TOC

Why ?

Why?

Medical research (WHO) shows that EBF for at least 4 months reduces HIV transmission and improves the overall health of children.

Why?

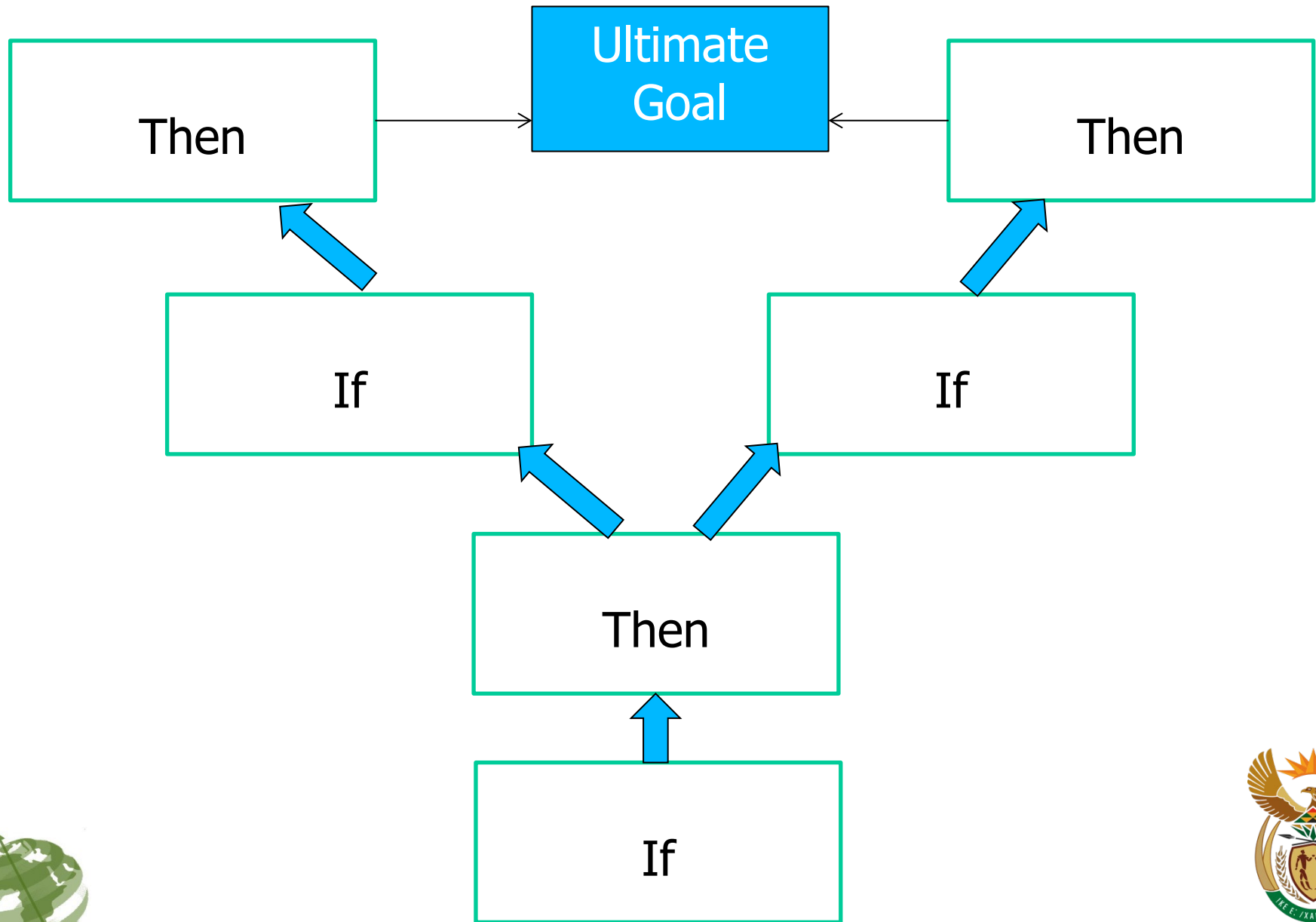
If mothers are a) provided with information on the benefits/safety of EBF in the context of HIV, b) provided the space to think about the feasibility of feeding options, then they will realise the the impracticality of exclusive FF and the danger of the resultant mix feeding. This will encourage them to EBF. Other caregivers' beliefs about EBF (and influence on caregiving practices) may however mitigate the decision to EBF.

Why?

Providing counselling in a safe, private, supportive and accessible way will lead to mothers being receptive to the info provided, and more likely to ask questions relating to their circumstances.



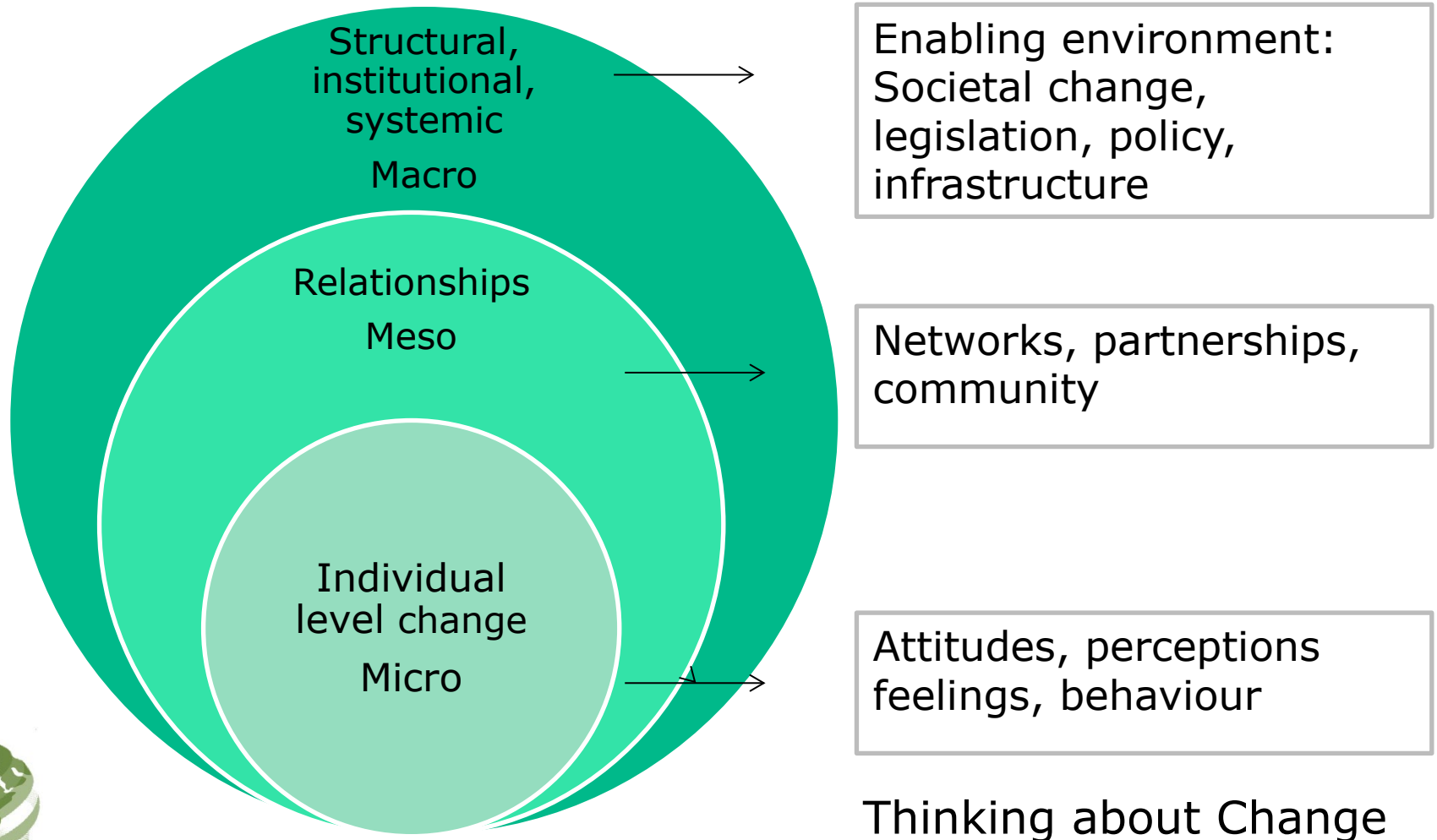
Multiple pathways to change



■ Thinking about change ...



Levels of Change



Thinking about Change



Other ways of thinking about change levels

- Useful to target a specific actor-level as the starting point to conceptualise change (stakeholder)
- Other ways of thinking of change:
 - Individual level (e.g. Youth have increased belief in a positive future)
 - Population level (e.g. Greater % of high school population graduates)
 - Influence (e.g. Communities advocate for improved schooling in their areas)
 - Leverage (e.g. New funding models for schools)

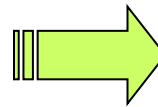
Thinking about Change



People **targeted** by the project as vehicle for achieving the Outcomes.

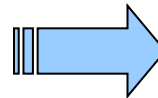
People who ultimately **benefit** from a project intervention

Grade 10, 11, 12 educators to improve skills for teaching maths & science



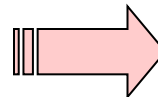
Grade 10, 11 & 12 science students who get better examination results

Small scale farmers to improve farming methods



Children and families who benefit from more nutritional food

Social workers to practice developmental social welfare



Communities



- Development interventions can be very complex.
- But – defining the pathway of change helps to cut through the complexity



Thinking about Change



- How complexity leads to simplicity
- http://www.ted.com/talks/eric_berlow_how_complexity_leads_to_simplicity



- Let's build a theory of change for your programme ..

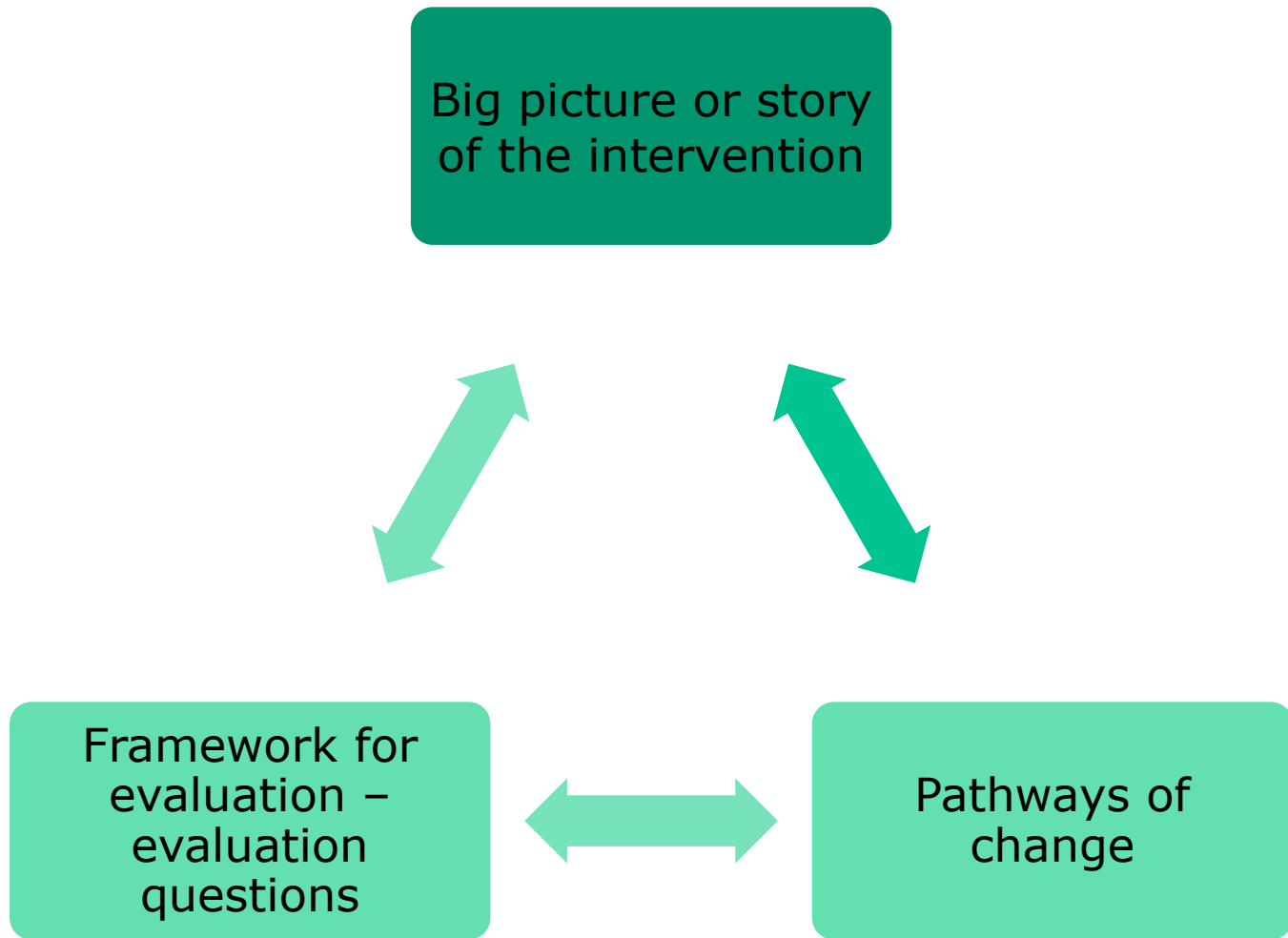


A good theory of change identifies:

- What you do in your programme (intervention)
- Where you want to go (goal)
- The route that will get you there (outcomes)
- Why certain milestones / outcomes are necessary steps in the path you will travel



Many variations in style but 3 common or basic elements of a TOC



Theory of change components

1. Goal & outcomes – modelled in causal pathways
2. Interventions (outputs / actions), leading to the relevant outcomes
3. Indicators
4. Assumptions and rationales
5. Narrative



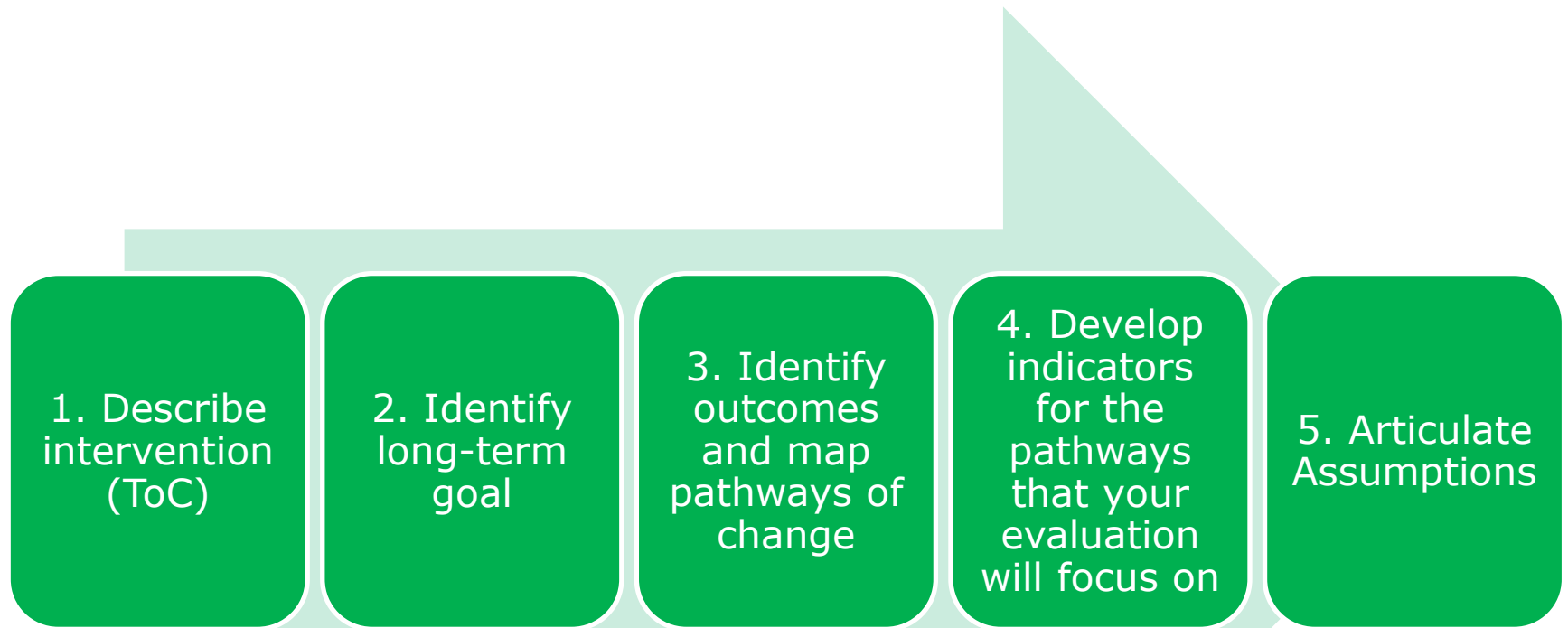
Components



- Exercise: Let's look at some examples of TOC
 - Are they clear?
 - Can you see what the intervention is intended to achieve?
 - And does it explain how and why it should be achieved?



Steps in the Development of your ToC and ToA



Step 1: Describe your interventions (ToA)

- Consult your programme documents
- Identify the interventions (activities and/or outputs) that make up your programme. Write each on a separate card.
- Are there some that group together?
- Arrange them on the wall as the bottom of a pathway of change.
- Why have you chosen certain interventions as opposed to others? Comment on the appropriateness of the intervention within the community and organisational context.

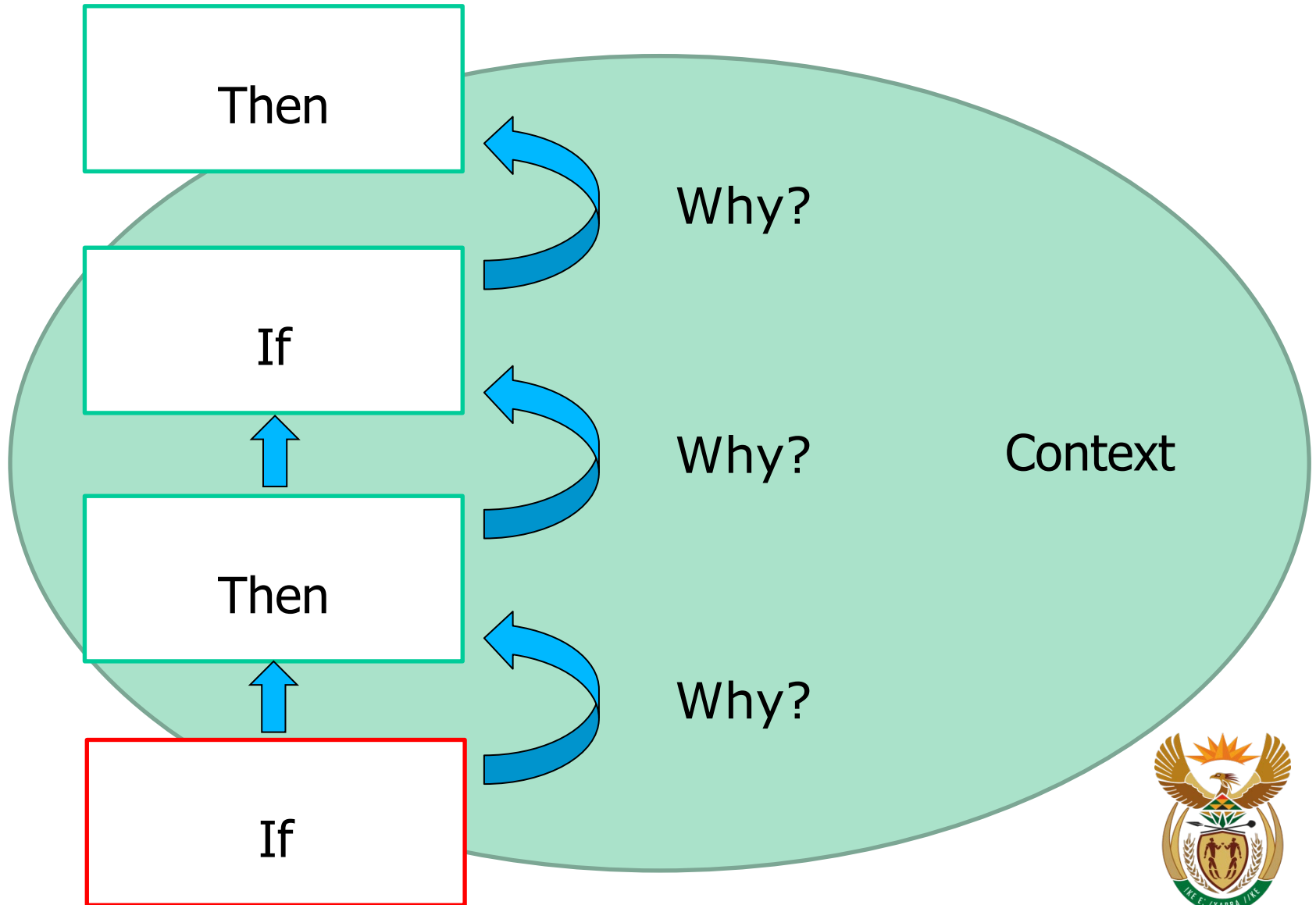


Typical cause effect chain

TOC

what?

Why ?



Step 2: What is your long term goal?

- Write down on cards the long term changes that you want to bring about?

"Given what you know today, what will be different in your country / community in the long term as a result of you successfully reaching your goal?"

- Link it to the national outcome that you are expected to contribute to



what?

Then

TOC

Why ?

Then

Why?

If

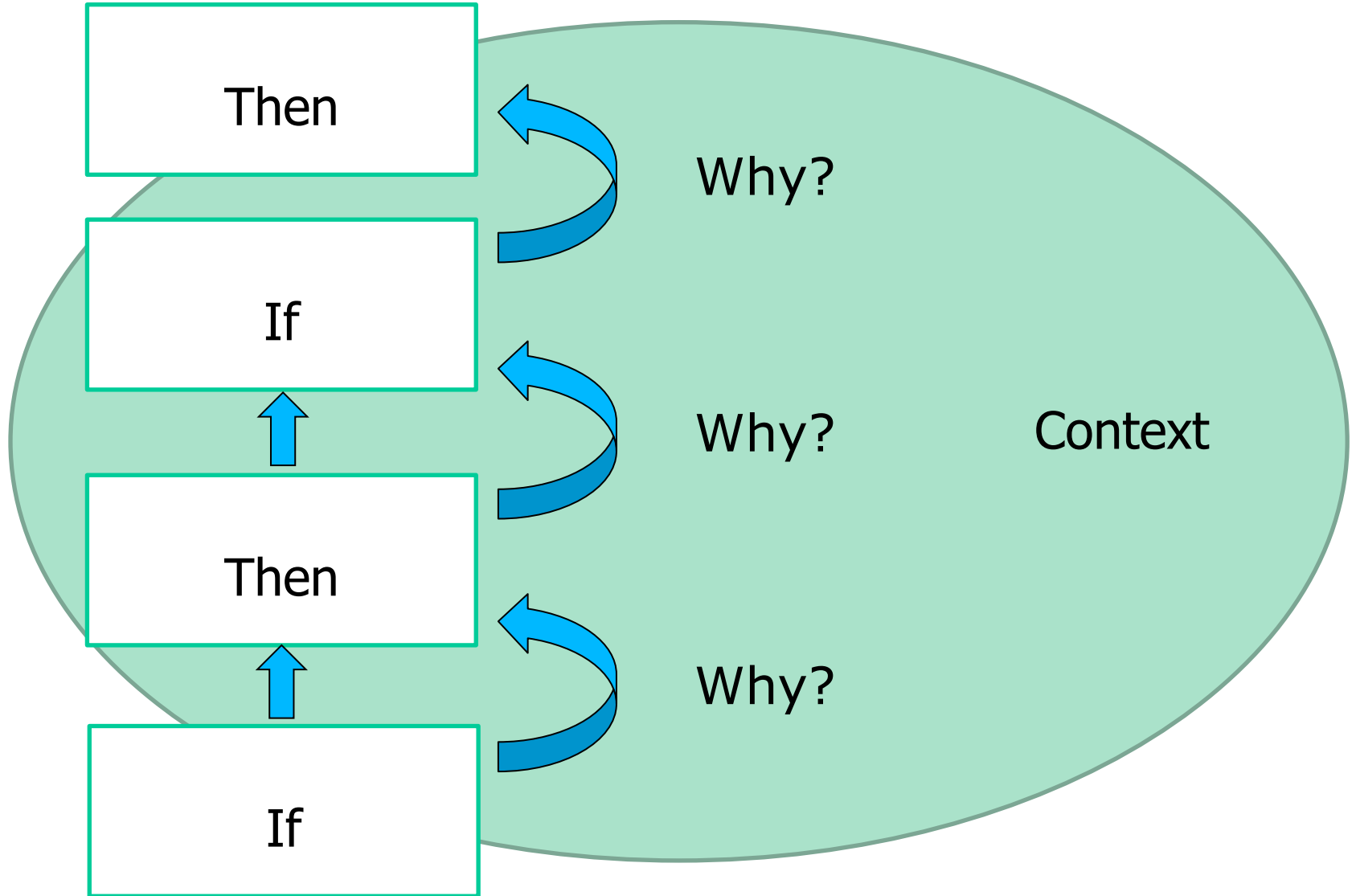
Why?

Context

Then

Why?

If



Step 3: Identify the outcomes and mapping a pathway of change

- Need to identify outcomes (preconditions) necessary & sufficient to produce the goal
- It is not what must be done (activities) but the changes that you wish to bring about for your target groups
- The Pathway of Change is the skeleton for Theory of Change – but not everything
- Forwards map from the intervention towards the long term goal



what?

Then

TOC

Why ?

Then

Why?

If

Why?

Context

Then

Why?

If



Process of constructing Pathway of Change

1. Consult your programme documents, but also use your own knowledge of the programme.
2. Brainstorm: *"What are the first level changes that you expect to see as a result of your intervention?"*
 - Write on cards; group similar changes together (e.g. changes in behaviour, policy, awareness etc.)
3. Then ask: *"What if these changes occur, what are the next changes we would expect, like or love to see resulting from these outcomes?"*
 - Keep doing this till you reach your long term goal



Process of constructing Pathway of Change

4. Work upwards by identifying 4-6 preconditions for each outcome.
5. Move up one pathway at a time.
6. Use arrows to illustrate relationships between the preconditions
7. Refine your pathways of change
 - Study the pathways of change
 - Ask: “Which elements of the map fall within the sphere of influence of your initiative”.
 - Exclude outcomes might be pursued by others and mark them as such in the pathway
 - Where in the pathway of change are you focusing your **evaluation?**



Step 4: Developing indicators

■ Indicator:

- Signs or markers that tell us how we are progressing to meet our goal. Indicators tell the story how success will be recognised at each step of the pathway:
- **“How will we know we have created outcome X? What will we see?”**

■ Target population:

- A group of people who are targeted by the project team as a vehicle for achieving the outcome. Also called primary beneficiaries.

■ Threshold:

- How much the target population have to change for us to feel that we have successfully reached this indicator. It is like a target.

■ Timeline: The time it will take the target group to reach the target



Process of developing indicators

- Brainstorm suitable indicators for the goal and outcomes (blue cards).
- Start with the goal and move downwards.
- Reach consensus on the indicators for each level in your pathway of change
- For each indicator specify the target population, threshold and timeline.
- Do the same for each level of outcomes



Step 4: Articulate Assumptions

- Purpose: To get everyone on the same page about the storyline being told
- There are three main types of assumptions in TOC:
 1. Assumptions about why each precondition is necessary to achieve the result in the pathway of change and why the set of preconditions are sufficient to bring about the long-term goal
 2. Assumptions that comes from social science theory that connects programme activities to specific outcomes for specific populations or communities. This may include findings from best practice research and from academic research **what about the other sources of theory: local knowledge, practitioner experience?**
 3. Assumptions about what needs to be in place in the external environment in order to bring about change e.g. policy framework, political will, access to services etc.
- You can use this assumption exercise to interrogate and review your whole theory of change



Process: MTV – Make your thinking visible – explain what & why & where & what else?

- Between each step in the pathway of change explain



- **What** is happening to lead from one level to the next
- **Why** this is happening
- **Where** is your evidence from that you are basing this assumption on ?
- **What else** needs to be in place in the external environment to support this change to occur, that you may have no control over? (context)



what?

Then

TOC

Why ?

Then

Why?

If

Why?

Context

Then

What &
Why?

If



what?

Then

TOC

Why ?

Then

Why?

If

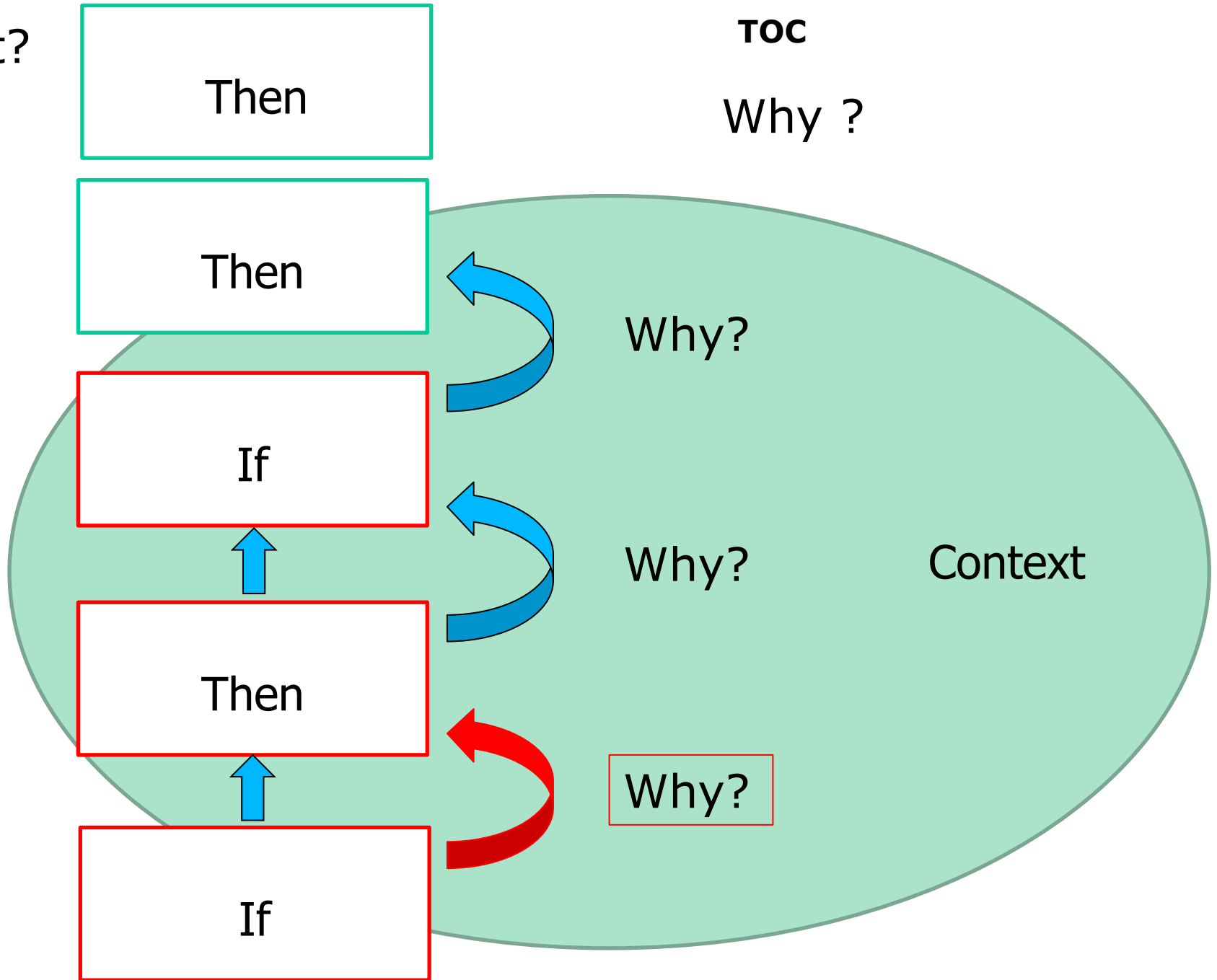
Why?

Context

Then

Why?

If



Checking the quality of a TOC

Plausible

- Compelling story that makes sense?
- Outcomes in the right order
- Are there any gaps in the logic?
- Have the assumptions been thought through?

Feasible

- Realistic that this program will contribute to the long term goal?
- Is the scope realistic?
- Do they have the right resources?

Testable

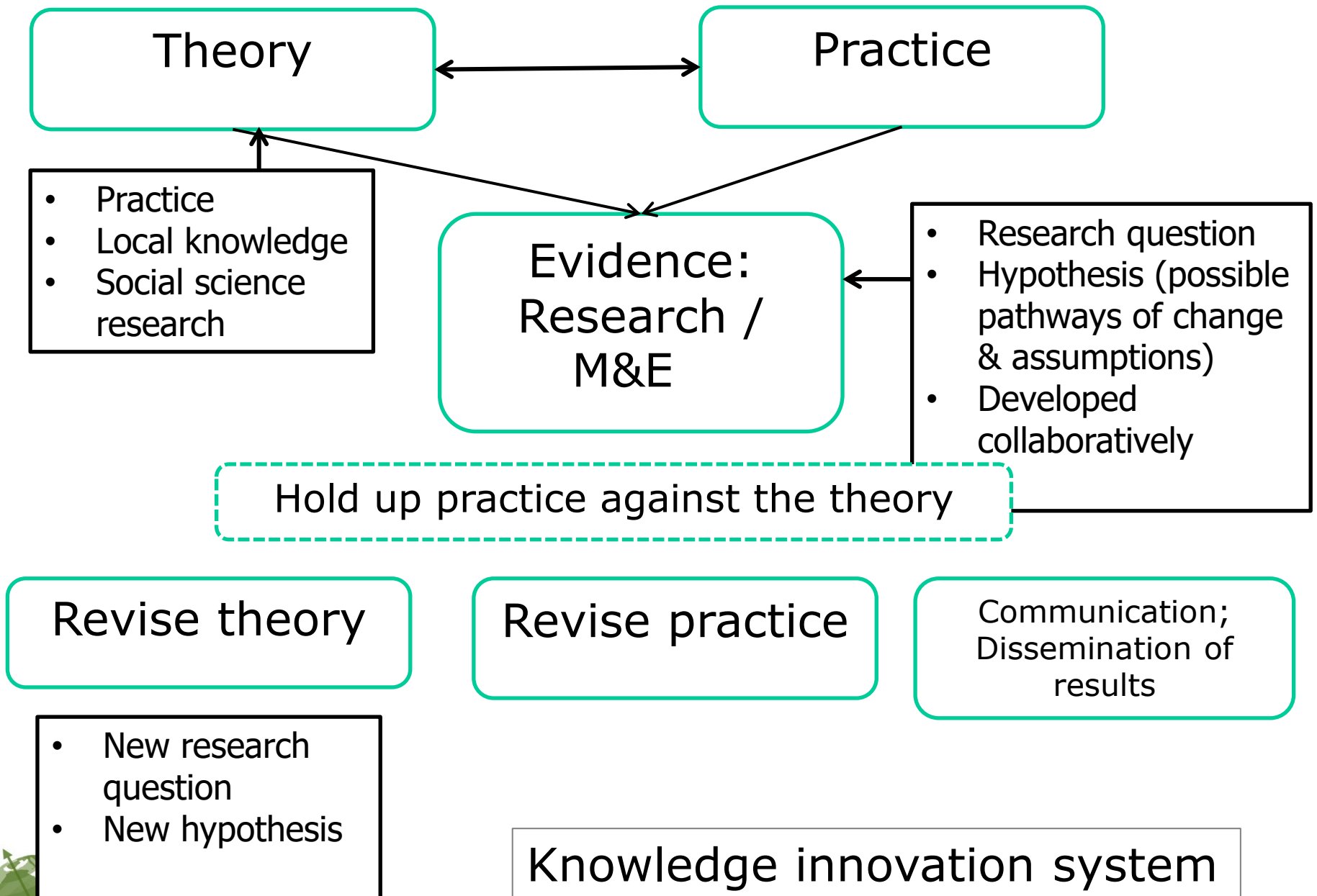
- Are the outcomes measurable?
- Are the milestones clear?
- Can assumptions be bested and proven?



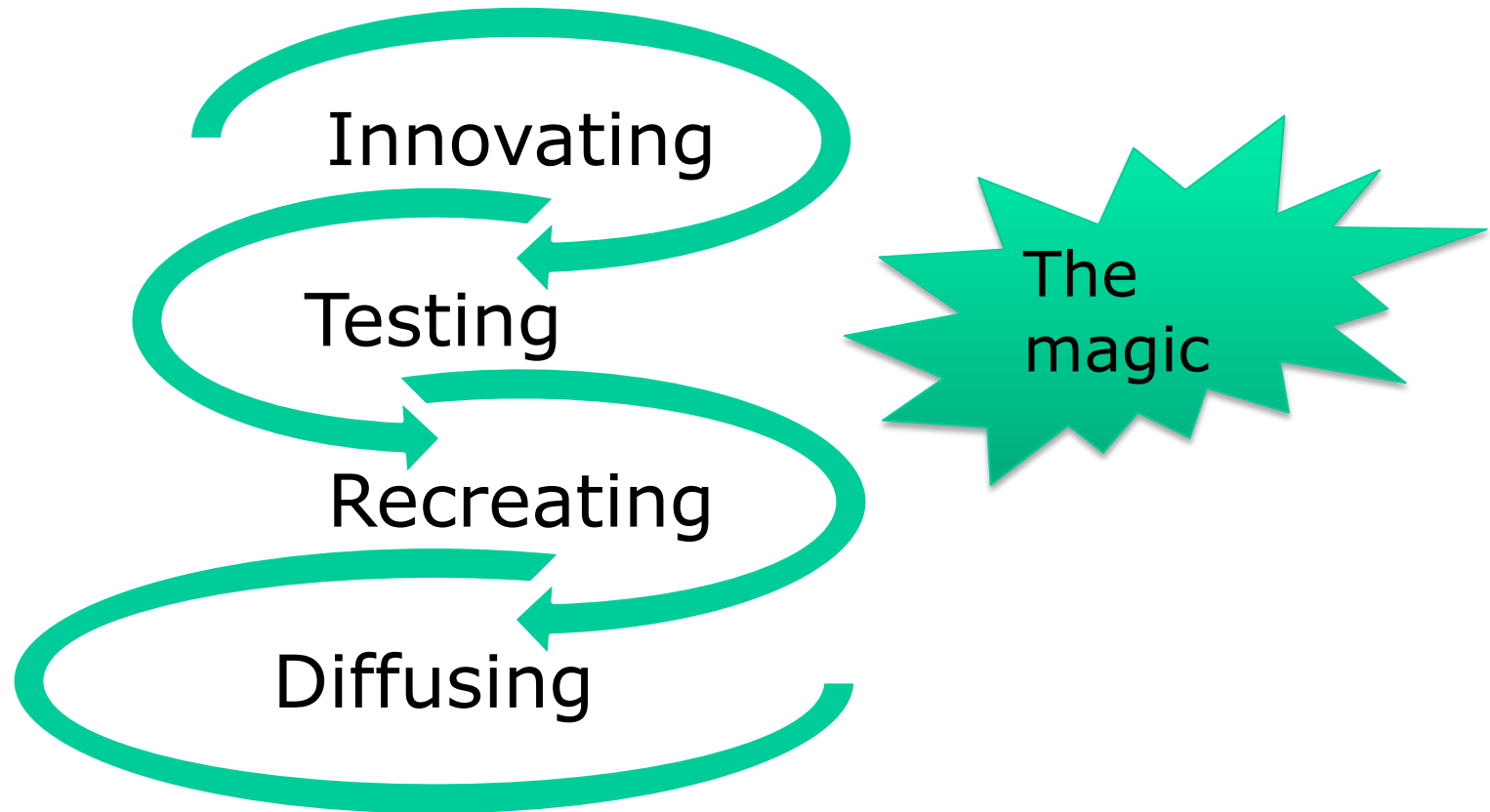


Dear Mr Gandhi. We regret we cannot fund your proposal because the link between spinning cloth and the fall of the British Empire was not clear to us.





Progress is dependent on



Needs: Critical thinking. Open participatory process.
Reflection / Self-reflection; Learning; Rigour; Time; Trust

