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The Evidence and Organizational Readiness Training Series

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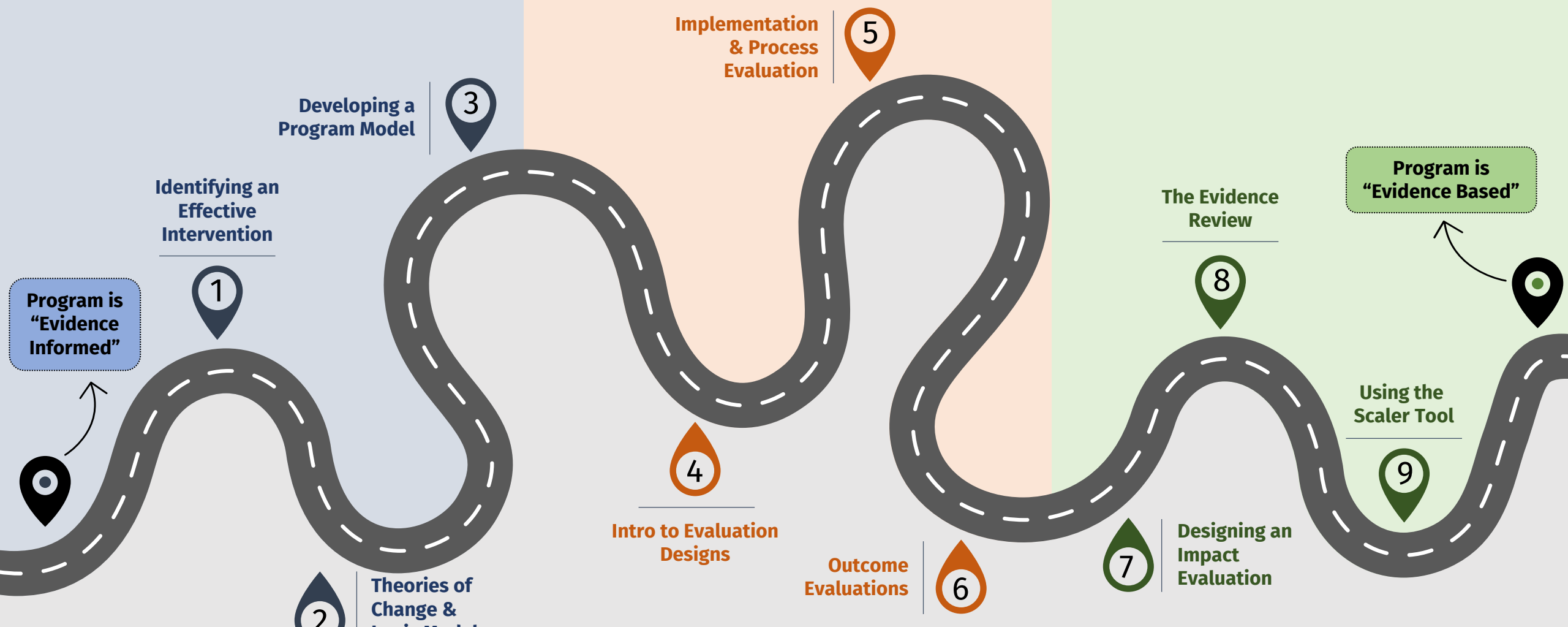# Introduction to the Training Series

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Evidence and Organizational Readiness Training Series
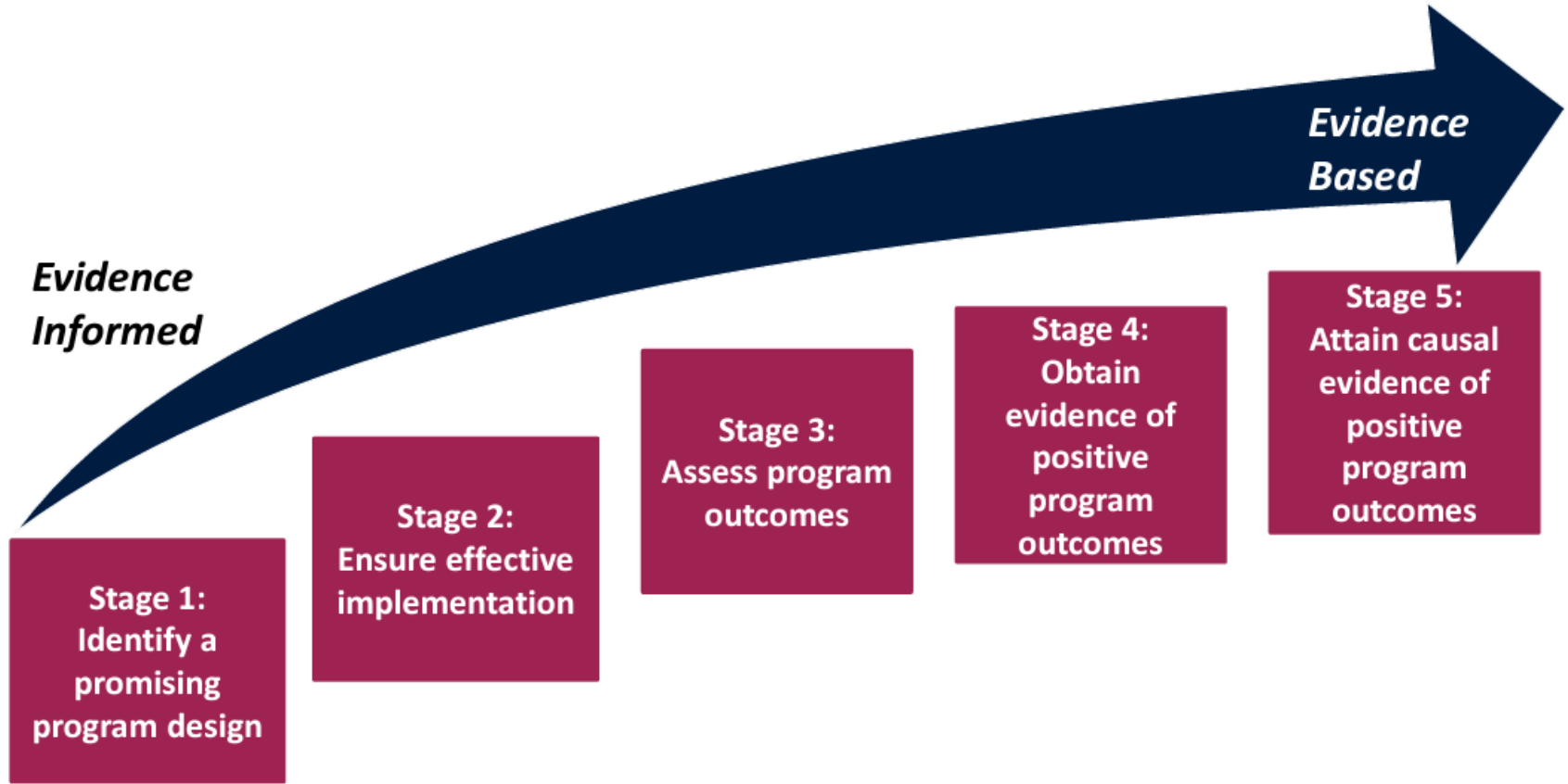
Module 1: Defining Program Model

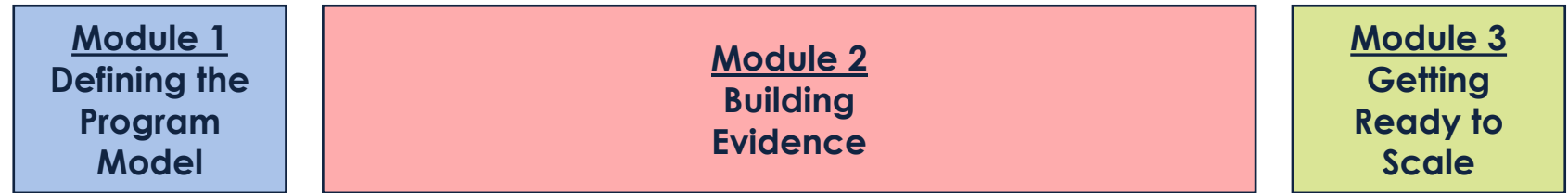## Module 2: Building Evidence

Module 3: Getting Ready to Scale

Implementation & Process Evaluation — 5

Developing a Program Model — 3

Identifying an Effective Intervention — 1

Program is "Evidence Informed"

Theories of Change & Logic Model — 2

Intro to Evaluation Designs — 4

Outcome Evaluations — 6

The Evidence Review — 8

Program is "Evidence Based"

Using the Scaler Tool — 9

Designing an Impact Evaluation — 7

AmeriCorps' Evidence Continuum

Evidence Informed

Evidence Based

Stage 1: Identify a promising program design

Stage 2: Ensure effective implementation

Stage 3: Assess program outcomes

Stage 4: Obtain evidence of positive program outcomes

Stage 5: Attain causal evidence of positive program outcomes

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Module 1 Defining the Program Model

Module 2 Building Evidence

Module 3 Getting Ready to Scale
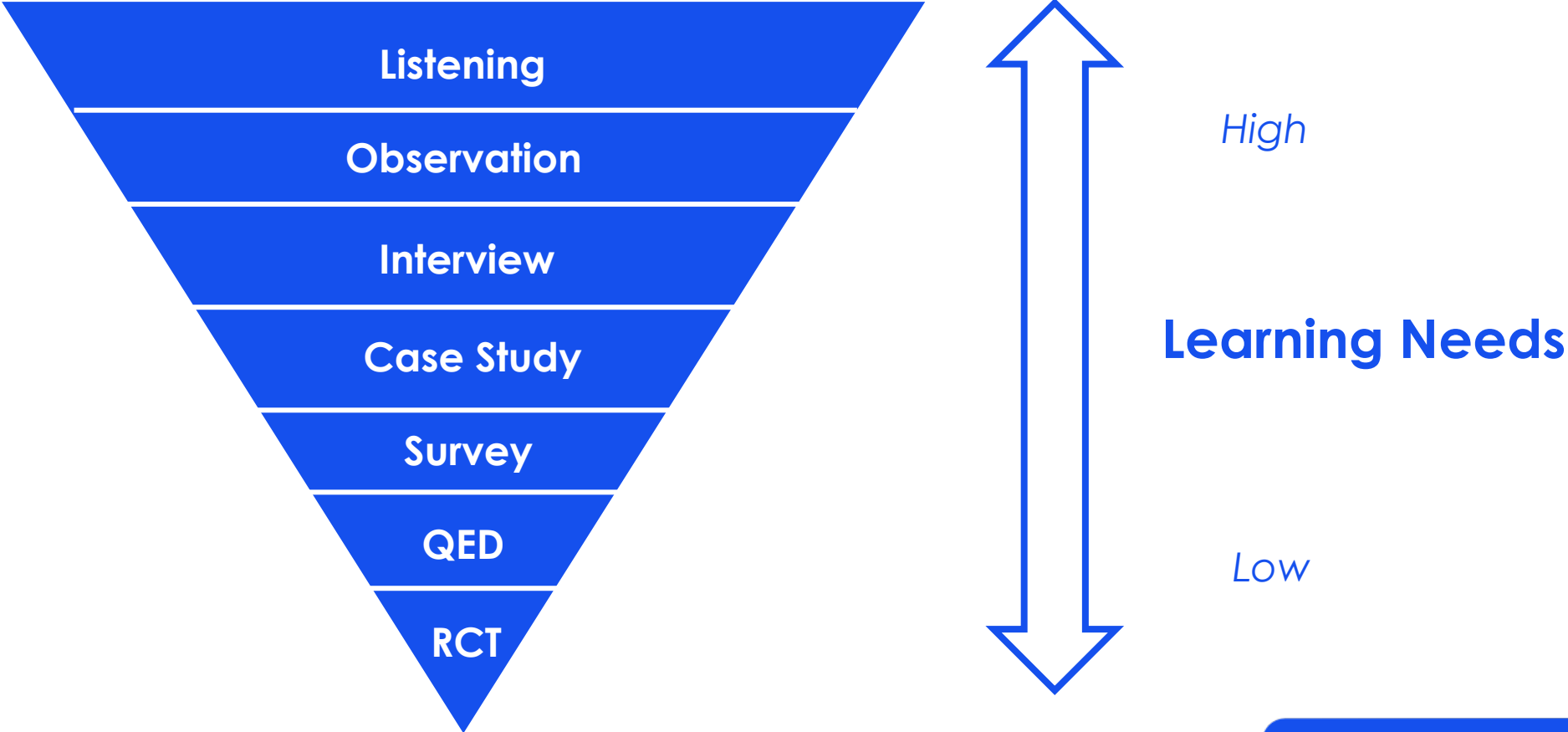
Learning needs and evaluation designs/methods

Types of evidence/evaluation depend on contextual factors unique to each program

Listening

Observation

Interview

Case Study

Survey

QED

RCT

High

Low

Learning Needs

Module I:

Defining the Program Model

Session 1: Identifying an Effective Intervention

May 11, 2023

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Today's Session: Identifying an Effective Intervention

Goals and Overview of Today's Training Session

1. Understand the definition and value of evidence building for program planning and evaluation
2. Understand what a Theory of Change is
3. Understand who your program serves (beneficiaries)
4. Understand what an effective intervention is

Poll: We'd like to know who is here with us today

1. Environmental Stewardship
2. Disaster Services
3. Education
4. Economic Opportunity
5. Healthy Futures
6. Veterans and Military Families
7. Capacity Building
8. Other

What is Evidence and Why is It Important to your AmeriCorps program?

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Poll: Do you use data or evidence in your program decision-making?

- Not at all
- Every now and then
- Most decisions are based on data

Why are Evidence Building and Evaluation Important?

1. **Why Does Evidence Building Matter?**
   - Data and evaluation are key drivers of AmeriCorps program development, implementation, and continuous quality improvement

2. **What Do We Want to Achieve?**
   - Introduce a basic roadmap to evaluation and organizational readiness that can be applied to your AmeriCorps program

What is Evidence?

- "The available body of facts or information indicating whether a belief or proposition is true or valid"

    --OMB Circular No. A-11 Section 200 page 13

Why is Evidence Important?

- Evidence generates credible, relevant, and actionable information about [AmeriCorps'] organizational effectiveness, operational performance, and the outcomes of national service programs

- Building evidence for what works, for whom, and under what circumstances, is a central part of ensuring the public's access to effective solutions.

- Evidence supports innovation, improvement, and learning

--AmeriCorps Strategic Learning and Evidence Building Plan, 2022-2026

What is a Theory of Change?

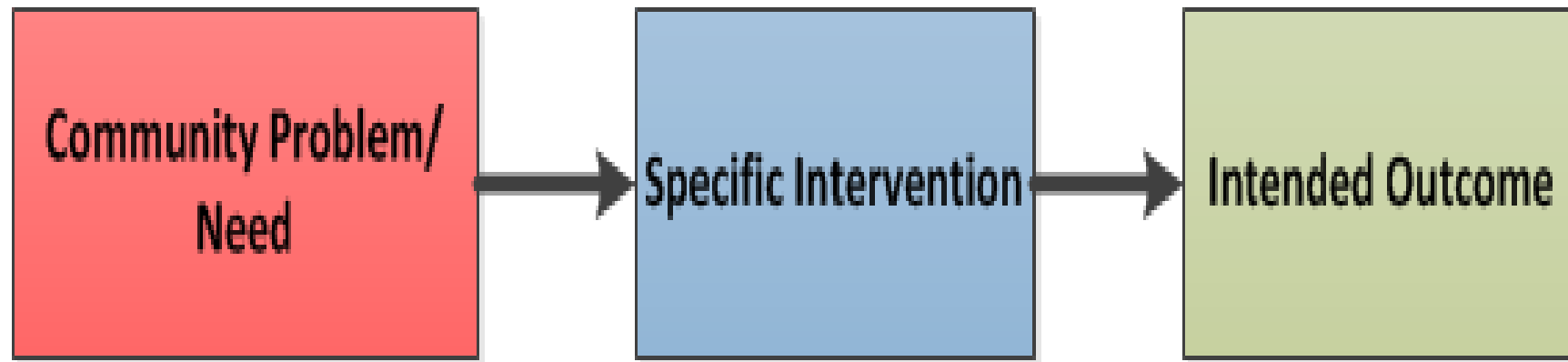# Poll: How familiar are you with "Theory of Change"?

- Very familiar
- Moderately familiar
- Somewhat familiar
- Not at all familiar

Theory of Change

What is it?

- The general underlying idea of how you believe your intervention will create change

- There are three main elements:

| Community Problem/ Need | → | Specific Intervention | → | Intended Outcome |

- These three elements include your "beneficiary" (your target population)

Paired Sharing Activity

| Community Problem/ Need | → | Specific Intervention | → | Intended Outcome |
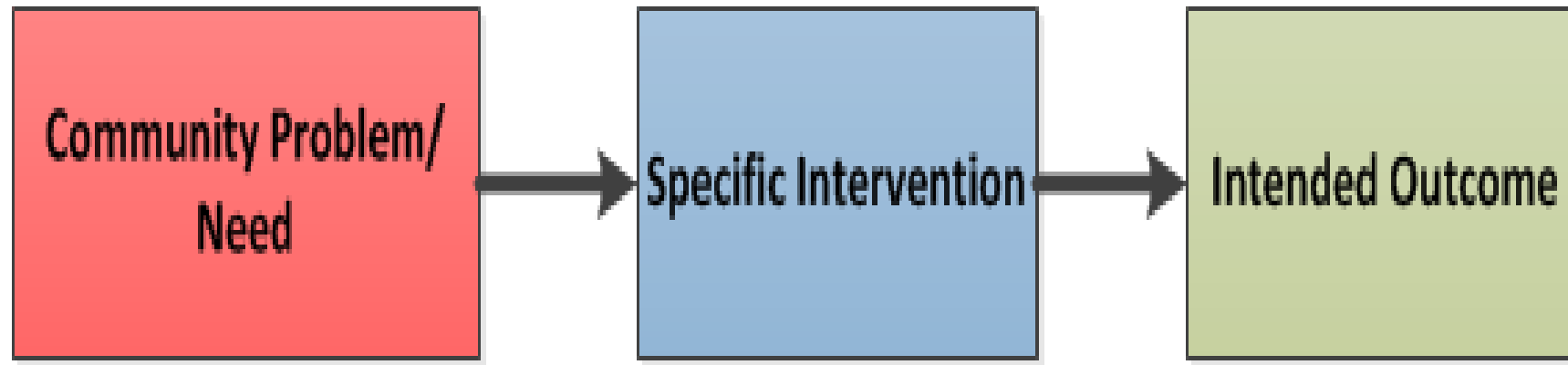
- **Share a "Need—Intervention" example in your program with your partner**

AmeriCorps Checklist: How to define your target population

Target Population/ Beneficiaries	
Clearly describe the characteristics of the population to be served by the intervention.	• Students/ caregivers/ veterans/ land plots • Marginalized/underserved/minoritized communities • New arrivals to the US
Clearly describe the criteria for determining who is **eligible** to participate in the intervention (inclusion criteria).	• K-3 students • Youth aged 14-18 • % of the poverty line • Multilanguage learners • [Invasive species]
Clearly describe the criteria for determining who is **not eligible** to participate in the intervention (exclusion criteria).	• Not in age range • Under 18/ minors • Above income threshold

Activity: Who is your beneficiary?

Complete the AmeriCorps Checklist

- Take 5 minutes to describe your target beneficiary and submit your descriptions in the chat
- Some questions you can consider in determining population are:
  - ➤ What are the characteristics of your target population?
  - ➤ How do you decide whether to include a candidate in your intervention?
  - ➤ How do you decide who to exclude (i.e., who is not a good fit for your intervention)?

Poll: Which of the following components are you familiar with?

| Components of an effective intervention	
Research conducted by an **external evaluator**	Which of these checklist items are you familiar with? ▪ Not familiar ▪ Somewhat familiar ▪ Familiar
Research included a **control or comparison group**	
Research has addressed potential **confounding factors**	
Research showed **evidence of effectiveness**	
Intervention has a **Theory of Change**	
Research showed that the **intervention was implemented with fidelity**	

AmeriCorps Checklist: How to determine whether an intervention is effective

Components of an effective intervention	
Research conducted by an **external evaluator**	An evaluator who is not affiliated with the program or organization and who has no vested interest in the outcome of an evaluation (who is impartial to whether it shows an effect or not).
Research included a **control or comparison group**	The group of participants that does not receive the program being evaluated. This group is compared to the group that receives the program, to see if the program works.
Research has addressed potential **confounding factors**	Ex: Math ability after an intervention but the kids in the two study groups have received different math instruction so you cannot tell whether impacts are due to your intervention
Research showed **evidence of effectiveness**	The intervention is informed by existing research
Intervention has a **Theory of Change**	Your service activities (interventions) and why they are expected to produce the desired outcomes.
Research showed that the **intervention was implemented with fidelity**	The program is being implemented as intended according to the program model.

Focusing on Outcomes

Intended Outcome
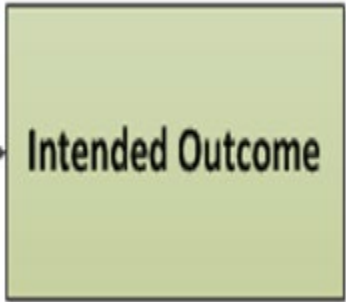
- **Outcomes** are the expected changes in the population served that result from a program's activities and fall along a continuum, ranging from short to long term results:

  - Short-term: changes in knowledge, skills, and/or attitudes (e.g., ↑ knowledge healthy choices)
  - Medium-term: changes in behavior or action (e.g., ↑ adoption of healthy food practices)
  - Long-term: changes in condition or status in life (e.g., ↑ food security)

- Outcomes are used in evaluation research. Some outcomes can be used for performance measurement AND suitable for evaluation

Outputs

How they different from outcomes?

- **Outputs** on are the direct products of a program's activities and may include types, levels and targets of services to be delivered by the program.

- Examples:
  - # individuals attending workshops
  - # individuals receiving services
  - # individuals receiving referrals

- Outputs are also often used for performance measurement

Evidence Building Activities at AmeriCorps

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Building Evidence of Effectiveness
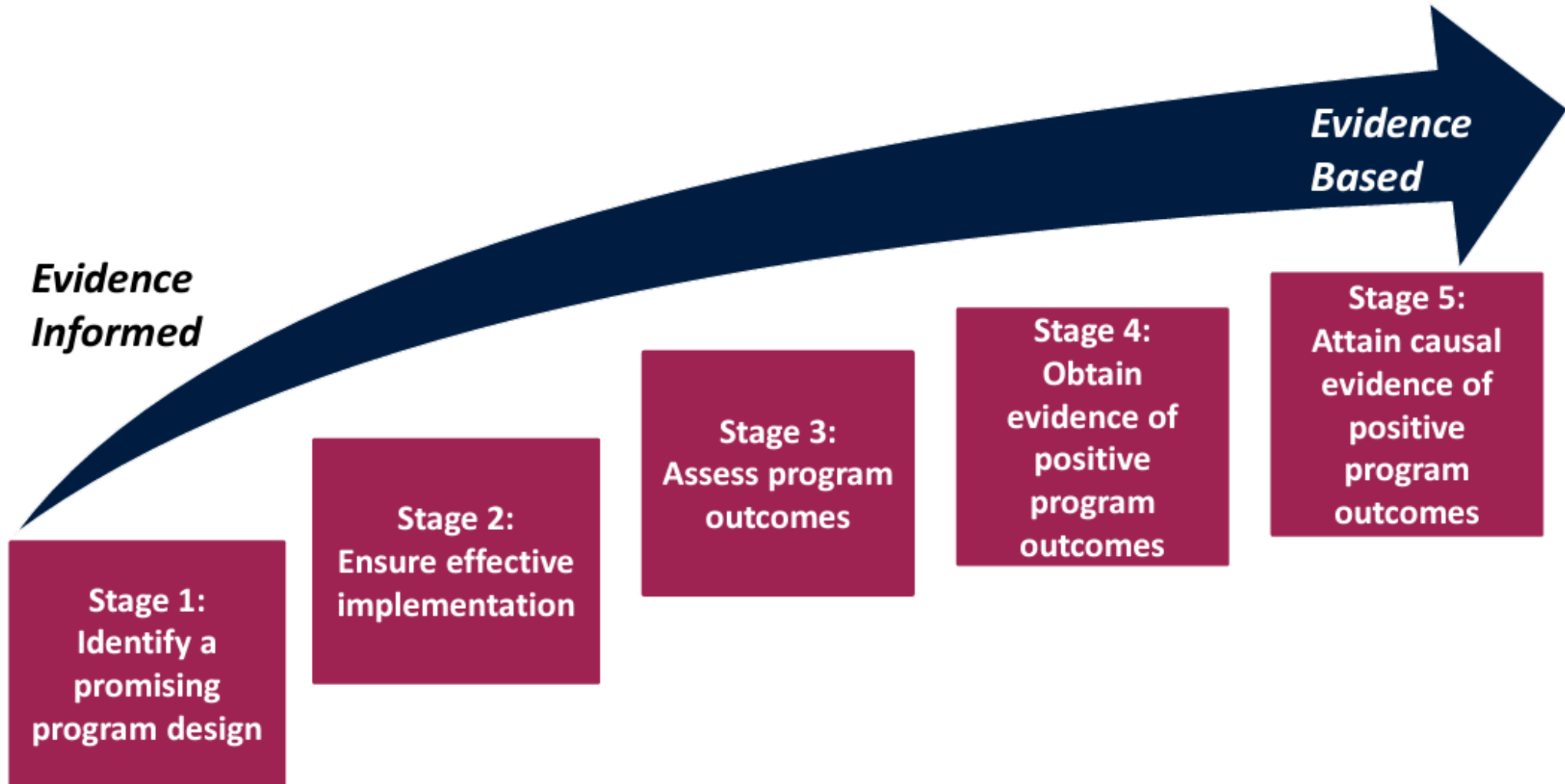
Laying the Evaluation Groundwork—Building the Foundation

- Your organization and your partners agree on need for evidence

- You start building culture of measurement, learning and evaluation

- Organizations, partners, and funders agree on outcomes and measures

- Organizations, partners, and funders agree on evaluation goals

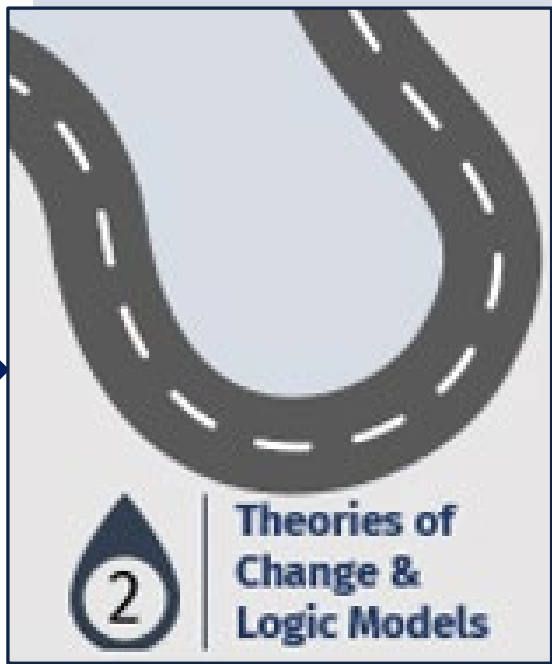- Organizations, partners, and funder support the evaluation

Next Session: Theories of Change and Logic Models

Session 2

Homework for Session 2

Think about your own program. Be prepared to come to our next session with ideas of how you might develop and describe your program's Theory of Change to your peers.

Questions?

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Thank you!

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