



Family
Resiliency
Center



Empowerment and Participatory Approaches to Building Agency Evaluation Capacity Project

Year One Annual Report: Identifying Needs and Moving to Action

Champaign County Developmental Disabilities Board Meeting

May 22, 2024



Gratitude and Appreciation

Participants

- Board Members and Staff
- Agency Staff and Leaders

Collaborators

- Nathaniel Underland

Research/ Evaluation Assistants

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Funding (PI Dariotis)

- Champaign County Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities Boards

THANK
YOU

Overview

- **Take-Aways**
- **Context: Goals and Approach**
- **Key Findings**
- **Moving to Empowerment: Next Steps**
- **Take-Aways (revisited)**
- **Microlearning Video**

Take-Aways (Year 1 Needs Assessment)

- **Agencies and Boards want:**
 - **To be heard** – participatory approaches for needs and action plans
 - **Resources** – provide knowledge, improve efficiencies, story-telling
 - **To work together** – communities of practice and open communication

Context: Project Goals and Approach

Capacity Building and Partnering

Project Goals

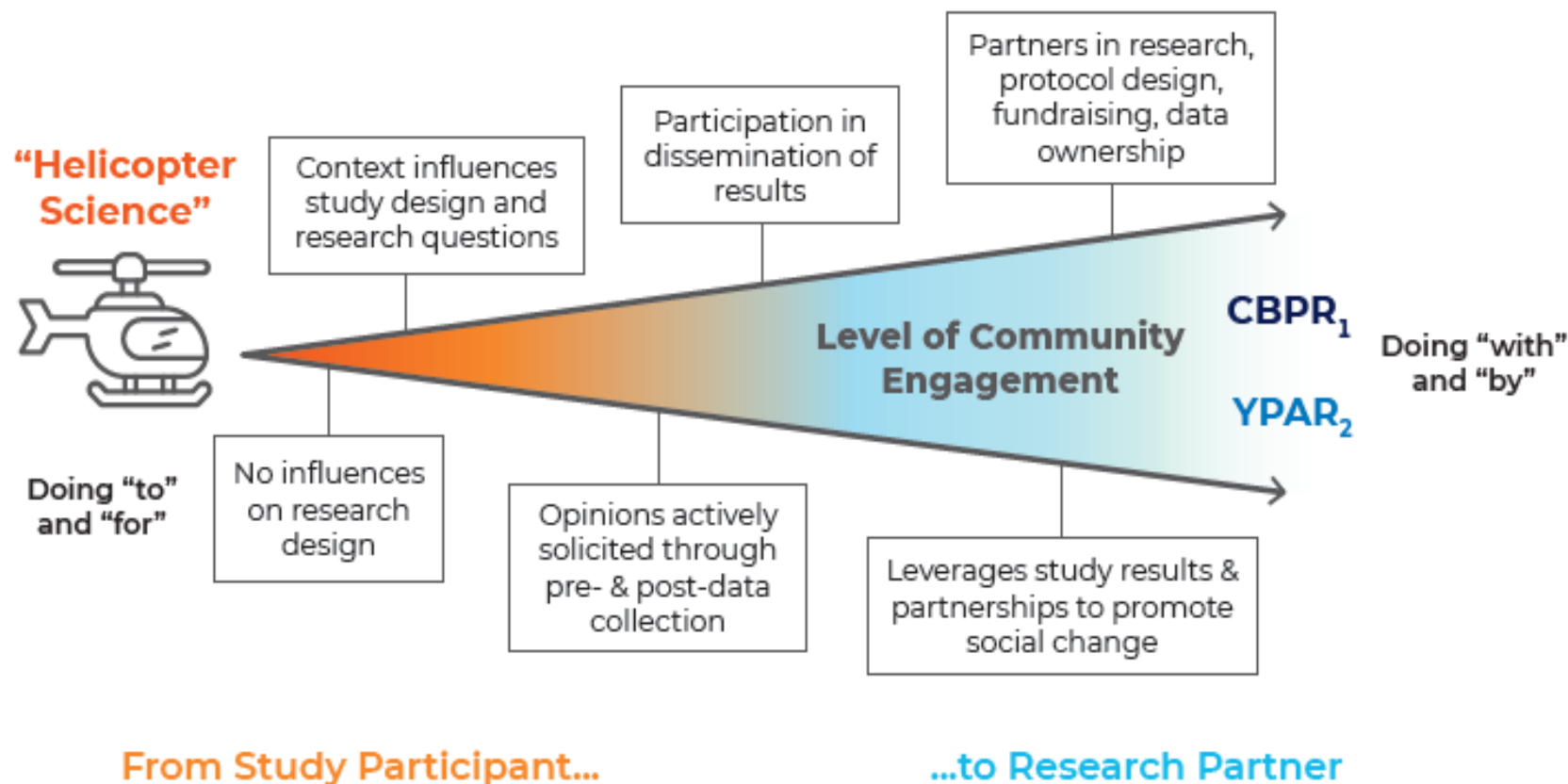
- **Overarching goal**: Build **evaluation capacity** of Champaign County Mental Health and Developmental Disability Boards and Agencies using **participatory** and **empowerment approaches**.
- **Year one goal**: Determine agency and board **needs, strengths, and expectations** for our team's roles and activities in future years. Then, begin moving to **action**.

Our Approach to the Project

- **Participatory** = centering staff voice & multiple perspectives
 - ***A more holistic understanding:*** current capacity, what has worked, and what needs remain.
- **Empowerment** = capacity building
 - Boards and agencies ***implement*** and ***sustain*** practices
 - Continuous learning organization(s)



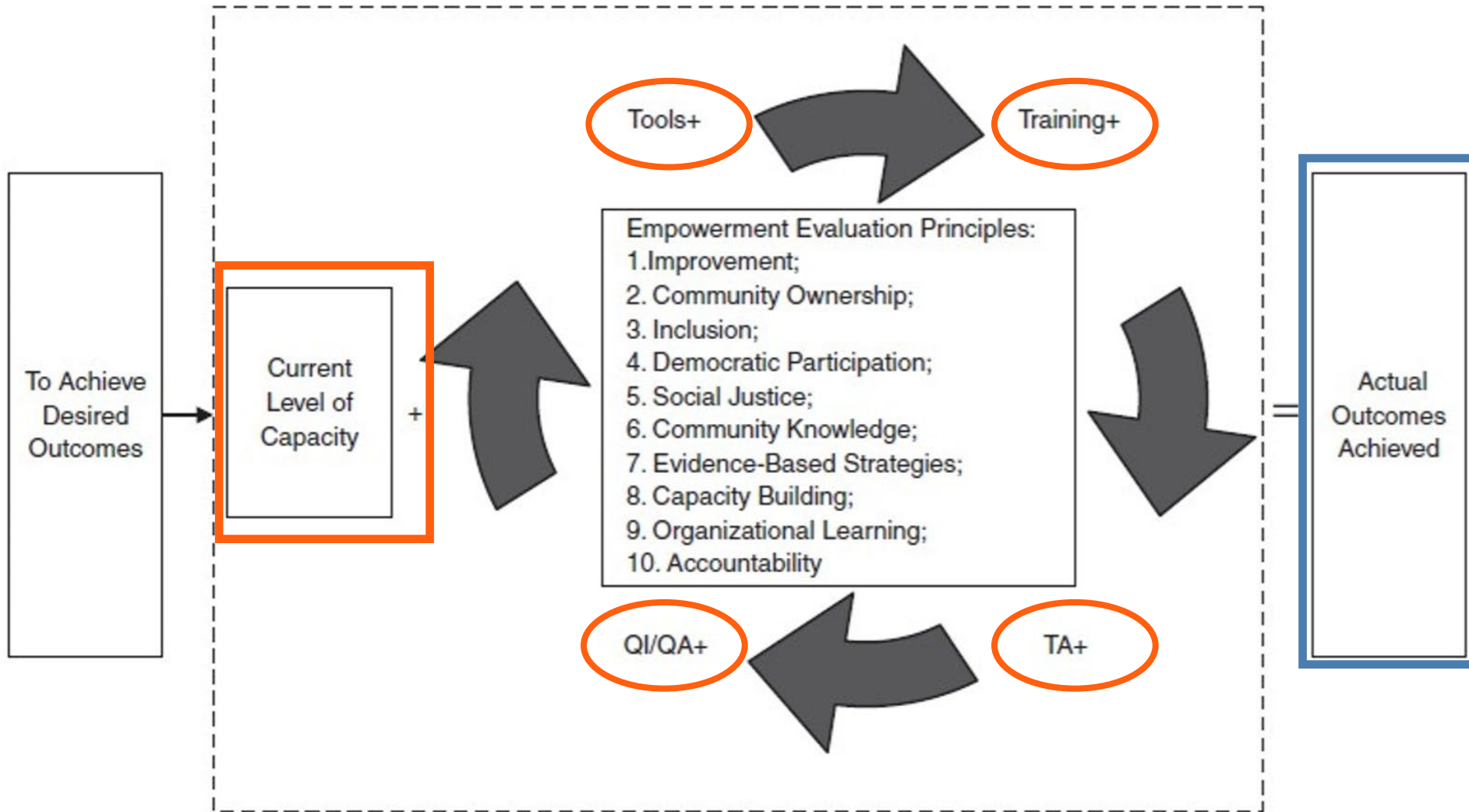
Participatory Research Approach



Graphic adapted from the following source: Balazs & Morello-Frosch, 2013

¹ Community-Based Participatory Research
² Youth Participatory Action Research

Empowerment Evaluation



**Needs
Assessment
Critical**

Data and Perspectives



13

Interviews and focus groups held with agency leaders, board members, and past evaluators



1

Group level assessment that captured perspectives from 19 agencies, 33 staff, and 250 collective years of experience through 2,044 insights.



2

Surveys administered.



64

Agency reports reviewed.



76

The number of perspectives we included from agency staff, agency leaders, and evaluators.

Making Sense of Data (Analysis)

- Read interview and focus group transcripts to identify key ideas
- Reviewed open-ended questions from survey data
- Reviewed 64 agency reports
- GLA Analysis (in-session and then by FRC team)





Key Findings

What we learned...

1. “We don’t know what we don’t know”- Familiarity with Evaluation Varies

- Familiarity with evaluation knowledge, including terminology and practices, varies.
- Capacity building is needed across all evaluation experience levels.

1. Recommendations for Improving Familiarity with Evaluation

Group	Ongoing and Future Activities
FRC Evaluation Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determine what evaluation resources are most useful to individual agencies. • Compile and create evaluation resources for all agencies to access.
Agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make time and space to participate in capacity building opportunities and utilize resources.
Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicate with agencies about why evaluation capacity is important.



2. User-Friendly Evaluation Training is Needed and All Parties are Receptive to Learning

- Training needs to meet everyone where they are.
- Agency staff and board members are willing to learn.

“I am new to the nonprofit world and am excited to have the chance to absorb the different vocabulary/focus points relating to evaluation/reporting vs the more corporate background I come from.” ~Agency Staff

2. Recommendations for User-Friendly Evaluation Training

Group	Ongoing and Future Activities
<p>FRC Evaluation Team</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Future topics for microlearnings such as logic models, selecting outcome measures, data management and analysis, data visualization, storytelling, survey design, translating findings into practice, improving participant response rates, methodology (e.g., qualitative, quantitative).
<p>Board and Agency</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide feedback on training and resource materials.

3. “Giving Back” Time via Evaluation Tools and Efficiencies

- Agency staff have limited time and capacity.
- Evaluation efficiencies are needed (e.g., standardized data tools).

*“We end up providing a lot of support from our office and we are not equipped to do it, but it creates some cross purposes for us. We cannot help people fill out their reports and then be the ones evaluating the reports. **It's really a challenge, but increasingly we are called to help new agency leaders understand their jobs.**” ~ Board Staff Member*

3. Recommendations for Giving Back Time

Group	Ongoing and Future Activities
FRC Evaluation Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing tailored, intensive technical assistance • Help agencies create institutionalized knowledge and procedures within agencies • Training in best practices in data collection and management
Agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make time and space to implement recommendations • Develop a shared evaluation strategy across agency to increase consistency and efficiency.
Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide funds to cover cost of quality evaluation activities, including external support if internal support is unavailable • Explore feasibility of a linked data system for cross-agency client data • Allow appropriate time frames to evaluate program success.



4. Developing Capacity for Storytelling and Effective Reporting

- Use evaluation methods to share programs' stories and improve reporting.

*We are a relatively small organization and have a hard time gathering data from all our participants. So I have found qualitative data to be the most informative. **Talking with families, participants, and staff and using those rich stories to inform my decision-making process is probably the most useful [for evaluating the agency's services]. It would be nice to have more quantitative data to back this up but getting that with consistency has been challenging.***

~Agency Staff

4. Recommendations for Developing Storytelling and Reporting Capacity

Group	Ongoing and Future Activities
FRC Evaluation Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer trainings on effective storytelling strategies and evaluation-specific storytelling elements • Provide strategies on when and how to present quantitative and qualitative data and how to integrate to tell impactful stories.
Agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making time and space to participate in capacity building trainings and utilize resources.
Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simplified/ refined previous report templates. • Provide concrete examples of expected outcomes including openness to qualitative narrative and quantitative findings.



5. Adopting a Mindset of “We are All in This Together”:

- Aligning expectations, cross-agency collaboration, and evaluation team engagement to advance evaluation and move to outcomes.

“[since] I've been on the board, I've known that there was this evaluation capacity building project going on, but I didn't know much about it, and I think keeping us board members more in the loop like maybe telling us, you know, giving a report at each of our meetings like what's going on, what are you doing? It would sure be helpful to me to know what's going on.” ~Board Member

5. Recommendations for Collaborative Mindset

Group	Ongoing and Future Activities
FRC Evaluation Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide regular progress updates to boards and board staff. • Pilot brief agency overview videos about what boards and other audiences need to know about the agencies.
Agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volunteer to participate in the working group/ learning community. • Make time and space to participate in capacity building opportunities and utilize resources.
Board/Agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve communication channels for shared goal- and expectation-setting.

Moving to Empowerment

Roadmap for moving agencies to outcomes



Example GLA Responses about Experiences with Program Evaluation

Next Steps

- Intensive technical assistance
- On-demand microlearnings, accessible to all
- Gain feedback and guidance from working group
- Develop workshops and trainings
- Implement recommendations identified as highest priority

Take-Aways (Year 1 Needs Assessment)

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Example microlearning: **How to Avoid Overpromising and Underdelivering** on program outcome reporting





Thank You!

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