



# **Evaluation of Unintended Consequences of Development: Building Evaluation Capacity in Support of Development and Democracy**

**U.S. Department of State Fourth Annual  
Conference on Program Evaluation  
June 7-8, 2011  
George C. Marshall Center**

# Scope of Presentation

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## TOPIC:

Relationship between development and democracy

## THEME:

Evaluating the relationship requires dealing with unexpected outcomes

## METHOD:

- Construct a simplified illustrative example
- Work through the evaluation of surprise issues

## DISCLAIMER:

In 45 minutes we will ignore some important issues and skip details

## **Part 1: The Example**

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# **Evaluating the Relationship Between a Portfolio of Development Programs and Democracy**

# Scope of the Evaluation Example

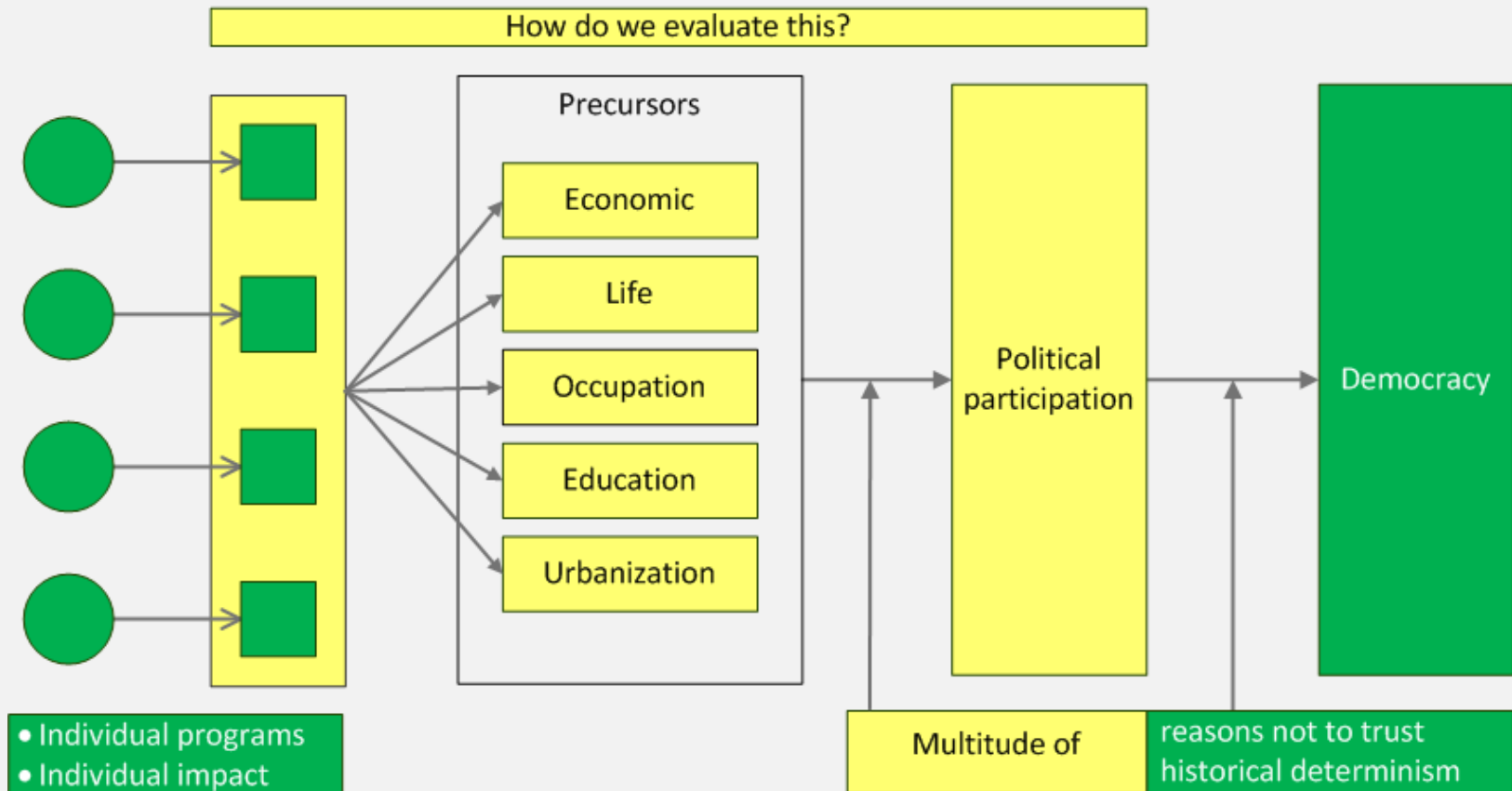
We already know how to evaluate individual programs.

We can't assess impact on democracy:

- 1) Time scale,
- 2) Non-linearity of change

We can:

- 1) Evaluate collective impact of programs on development
- 2) Work to a theory of the relationship between development and democracy



# Program Theory

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The good news, however, is that the conditions conducive to democracy can and do emerge—and the process of “modernization,” according to abundant empirical evidence, advances them.

Modernization is a syndrome of social changes linked to industrialization. Once set in motion, it tends to penetrate all aspects of life, bringing occupational specialization, urbanization, rising educational levels, rising life expectancy, and rapid economic growth.

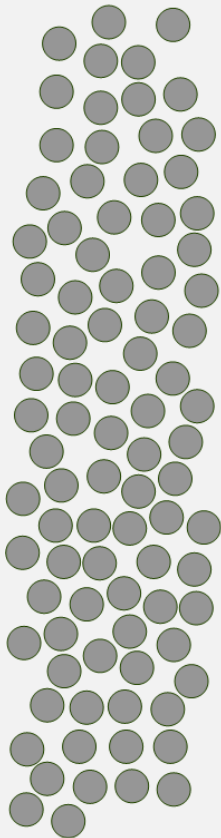
These create a self-reinforcing process that transforms social life and political institutions, bringing rising mass participation in politics and—in the long run—making the establishment of democratic political institutions increasingly likely.\*

\* How Development Leads to Democracy: What We Know About Modernization, Ronald Inglehart and Christian Welzel *Foreign Affairs*, March-April 2009 pp33-48.

# What would the evaluation look like?

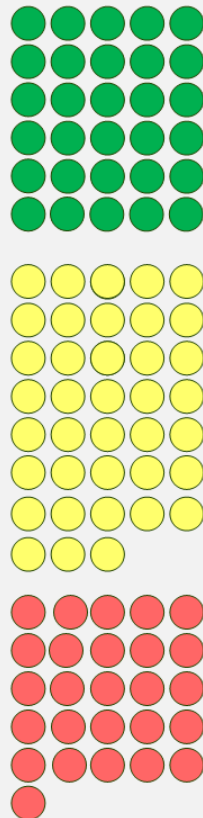
## *Define the Sample*

**1** Find development programs

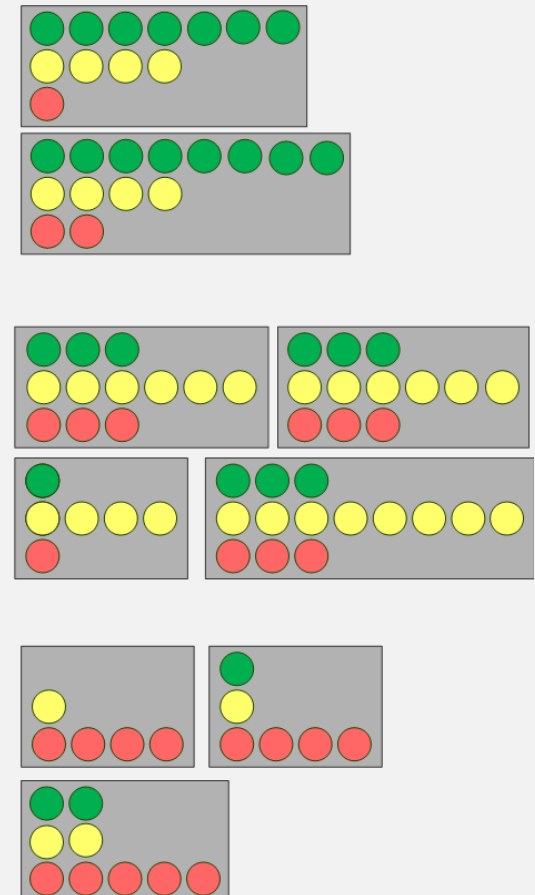


**2** Group by likelihood of success

- Successful implementation
- Operating for at least 1 year
- Impact demonstrated

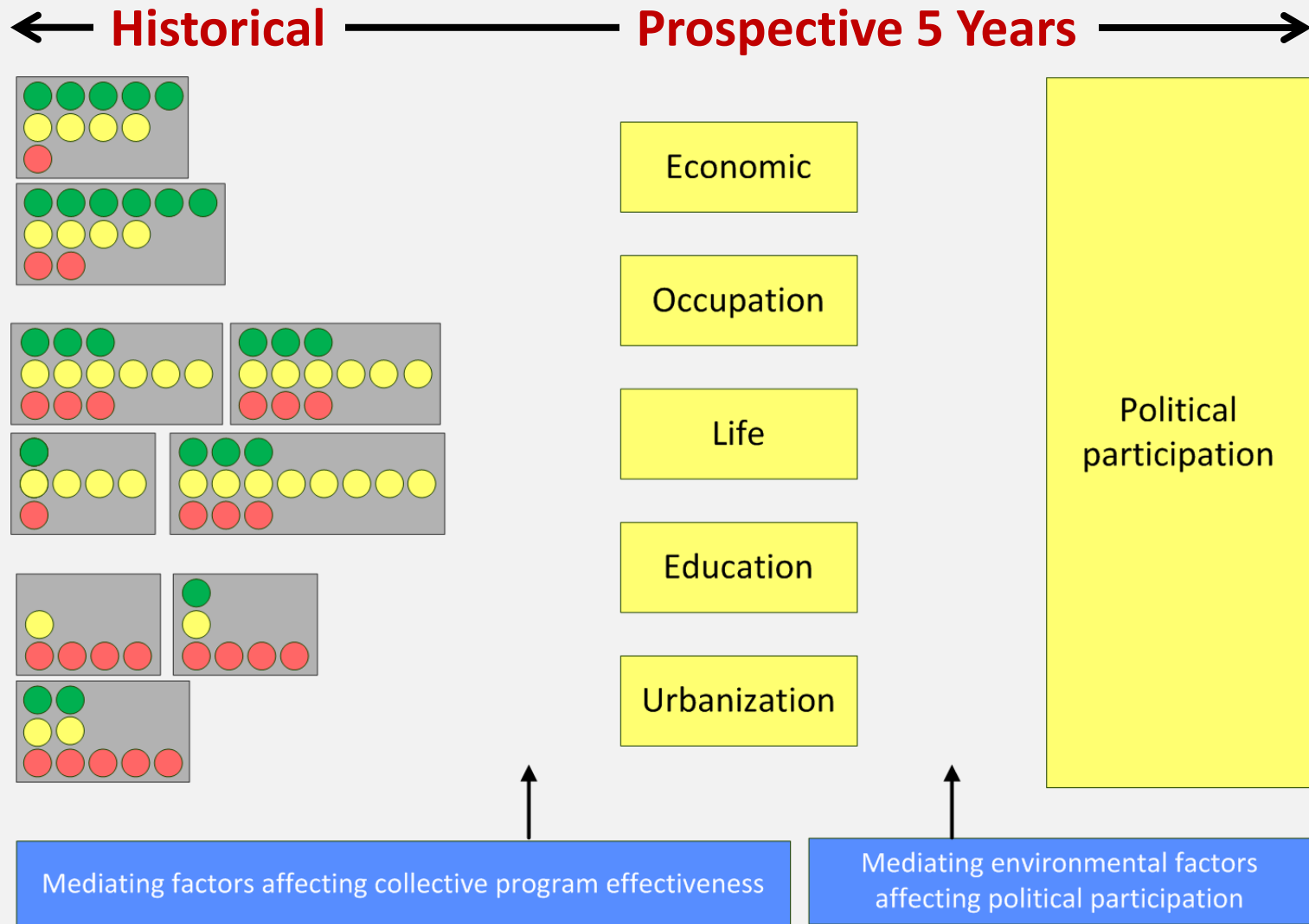


**3** Group by geographical area and clusters of areas to compare impact



# What would the evaluation look like?

## *Date & Time Frame*



## **Part 2: Exploring the Example**

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**Where are the unintended consequences?  
How do they affect evaluation?  
What to do about them?**



# Why is my example problematic?

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## Program behavior

- It does not account for unpredictable change over time
- It does not include many “side effect” outcomes that may occur
- It does not account for potential surprises in executing the evaluation

## Evaluation behavior

- Flexible design can deal with these problems, but flexibility reduces design choice.
- Good evaluation needs designs whose integrity is maintained over time.

# Organizing a Response

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## 3 Frameworks

Continuum of surprise  
from foreseeable to  
impossible to anticipate

Relationship of program  
and evaluation life cycles

Social/organizational  
map of sources of  
surprise

## 18 Case Studies

Eclectic methods –  
evaluation, planning, other  
social science

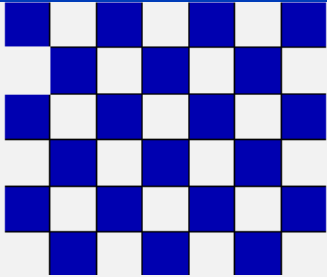
Methods are well known

Need to think of them  
systematically, as part of  
an overall approach

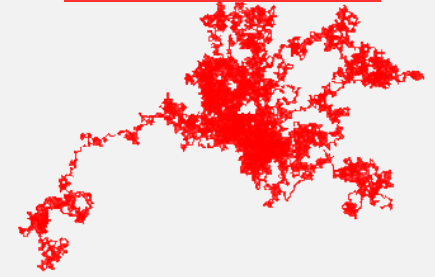
All we can do today is illustrate a small piece of the method

# Framework 1: Continuum of Surprise

**Foreseeable**



**Unforeseeable**



*Respect Data.*

*Trust judgment.*

**Theory**

**Limiting time frames**

**Exploiting past experience**

**Forecasting & program **monitoring****

**System based logic **modeling****

**Retooling program theory**

**Agile methodology**

**Data choices**

# Framework 2: Program X Evaluation Life Cycles

## Multiple, short term studies

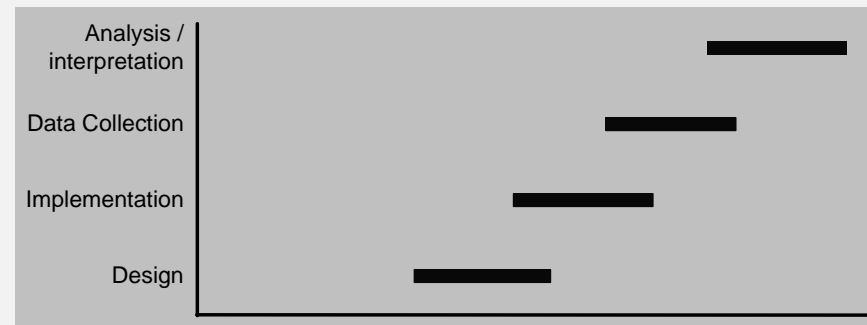
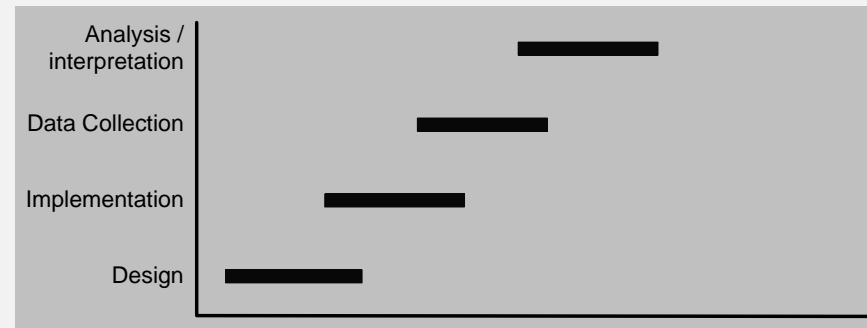
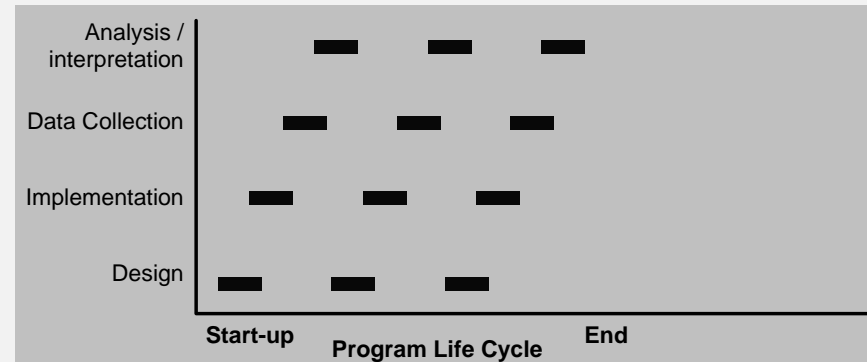
- Continuous process improvement
- Short time between cause and effect = inference with simpler methodology
- Inherently sensitive to surprise

## 1:1 Correspondence between life cycles

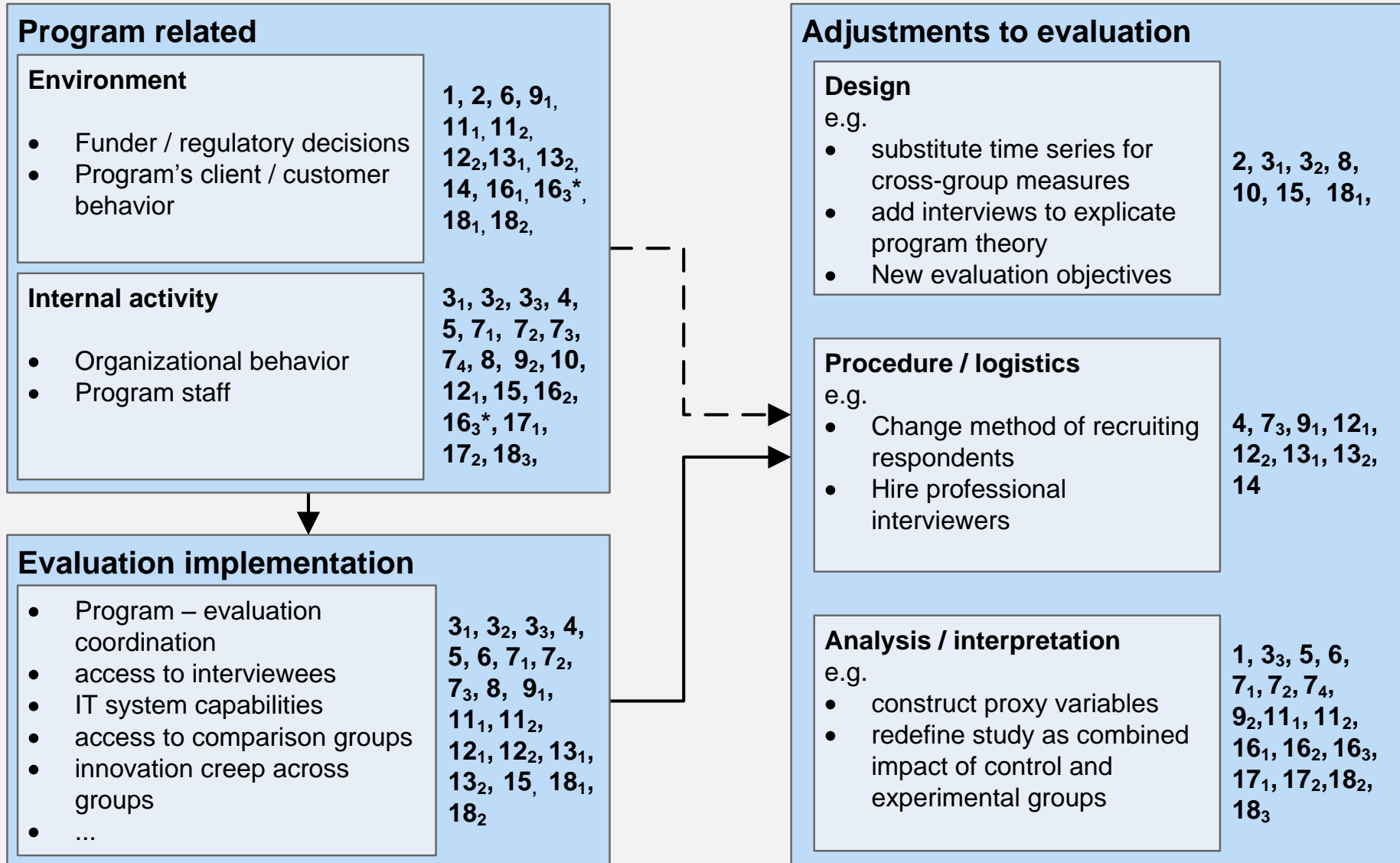
- Fog of start up
- Surprise late in program life cycle can force early stage evaluation redesign
- *Gets worse when design and data requirements must be stable over time*

## Retrospective focus

- Emphasis on program in stable part of life cycle
- Program change, evolution relatively unimportant



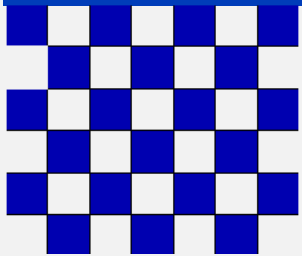
# Framework 3: Social/Organizational Sources of Surprise



# Examples of Problems Along the Continuum

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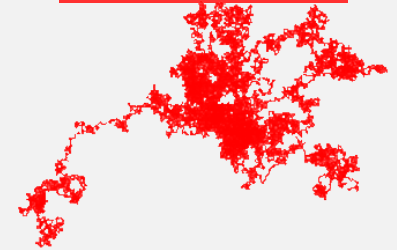
**Foreseeable**



*Respect Data.*

*Trust judgment.*

**Unforeseeable**



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## From case studies

Clinic user fees – Niger

Tight integration, evaluation  
and service delivery

Refugee resettlement

## From development → democracy example

Disease specific vs.  
health system  
improvement

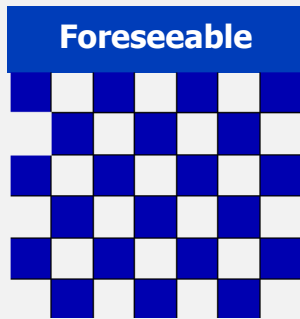
Interactions among  
development programs  
can be ignored

Abrupt change in donor  
foreign aid policy

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# Evaluation Tactics to Solve the Problem

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*Respect Data.*



*Trust judgment.*

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## Problem

Disease specific vs. health system improvement

Interactions among development programs can be ignored

Abrupt change in donor foreign aid policy

## One possible solution

Theory / experience

Expanded use of M&E / leading indicators

Regular interviews to determine policy changes and consequences

# For More on Evaluating in the Face of Uncertainty...

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Why Are There Unintended Consequences of Program Action, and  
What Are the Implications for Doing Evaluation?

Jonathan A. Morell, *American Journal of Evaluation* 2005 26: 444

Evaluation in the Face of Uncertainty: *Anticipating Surprise and  
Responding to the Inevitable*

Jonathan A. Morell, Guilford Publications 2010

Jonny Morell's blog: [www.evaluationuncertainty.com](http://www.evaluationuncertainty.com)



# Contact Information

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