

DRAFT April 27, 2011 Comments appreciated.

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

TOPIC:

Evaluating the 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:

- 45 minutes = ignoring important issues and skipping details
- Focus on evaluation, not the political science of democracy

Part 1: The Example

Evaluating the Relationship Between a Portfolio of Development Programs and Democracy

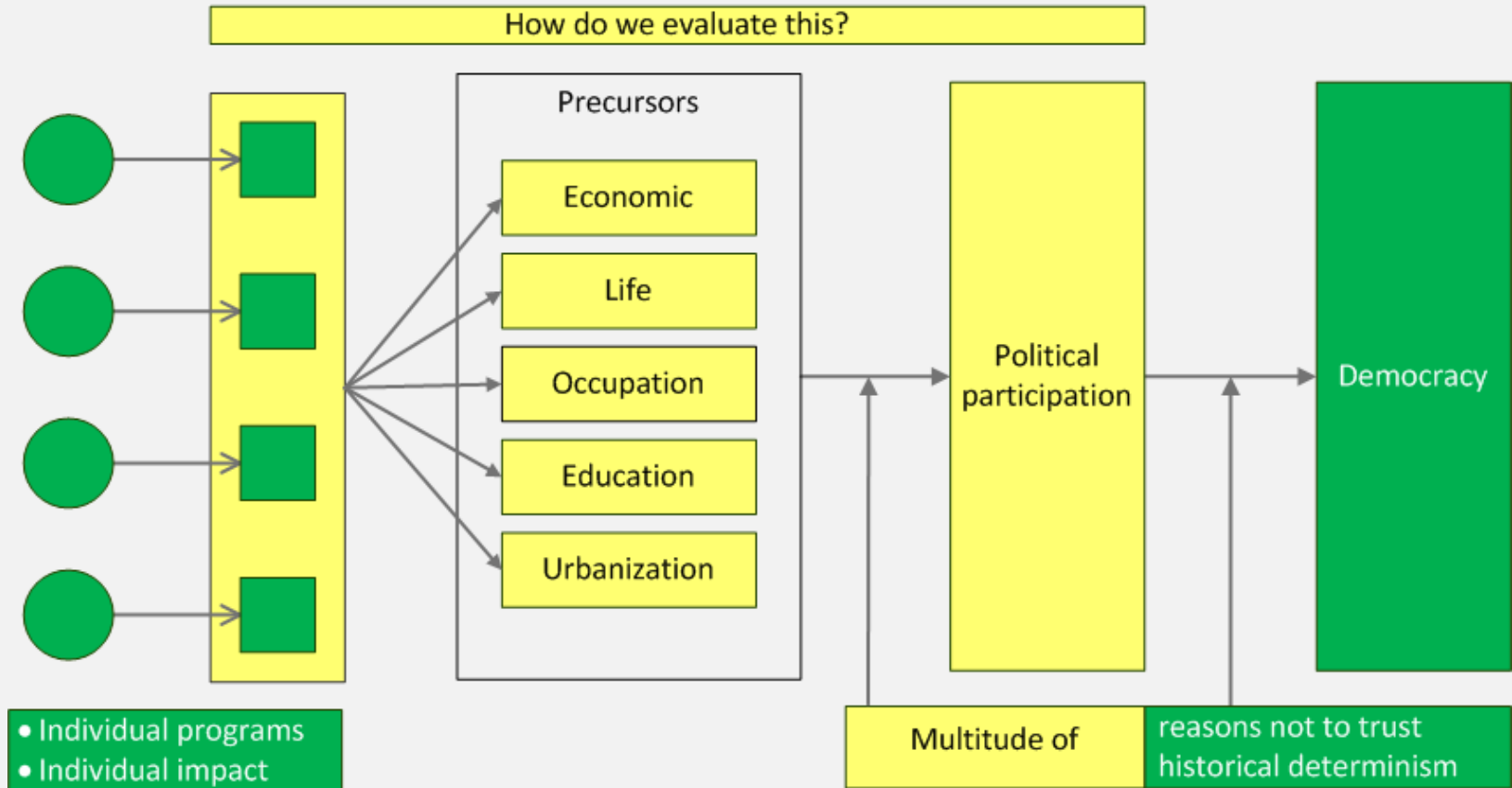
Scope of the Evaluation Example

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

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.

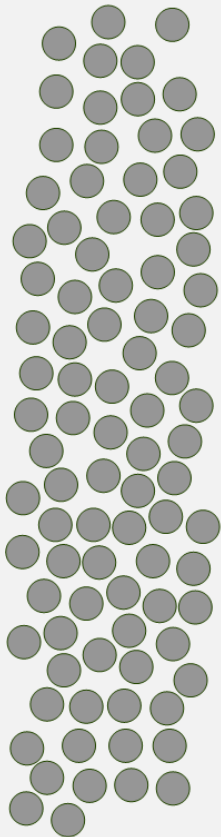
These create a self-reinforcing process that transforms social life and political institutions, bringing rising mass participation in politics and—in the long run—making the establishment of democratic political institutions increasingly likely.*

* 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?

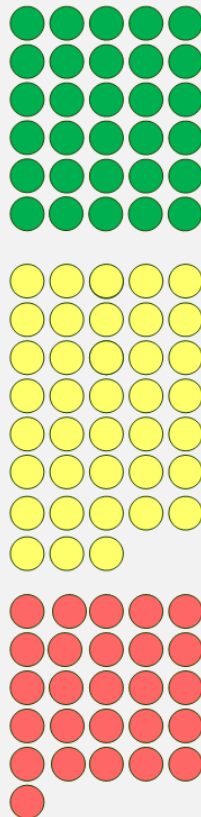
Define the Sample

1 Find development programs

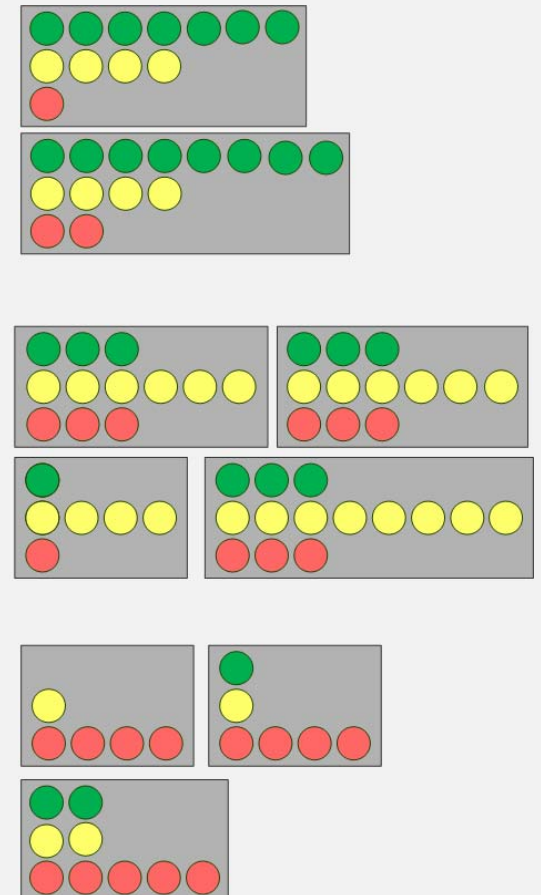


2 Group by likelihood of success

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

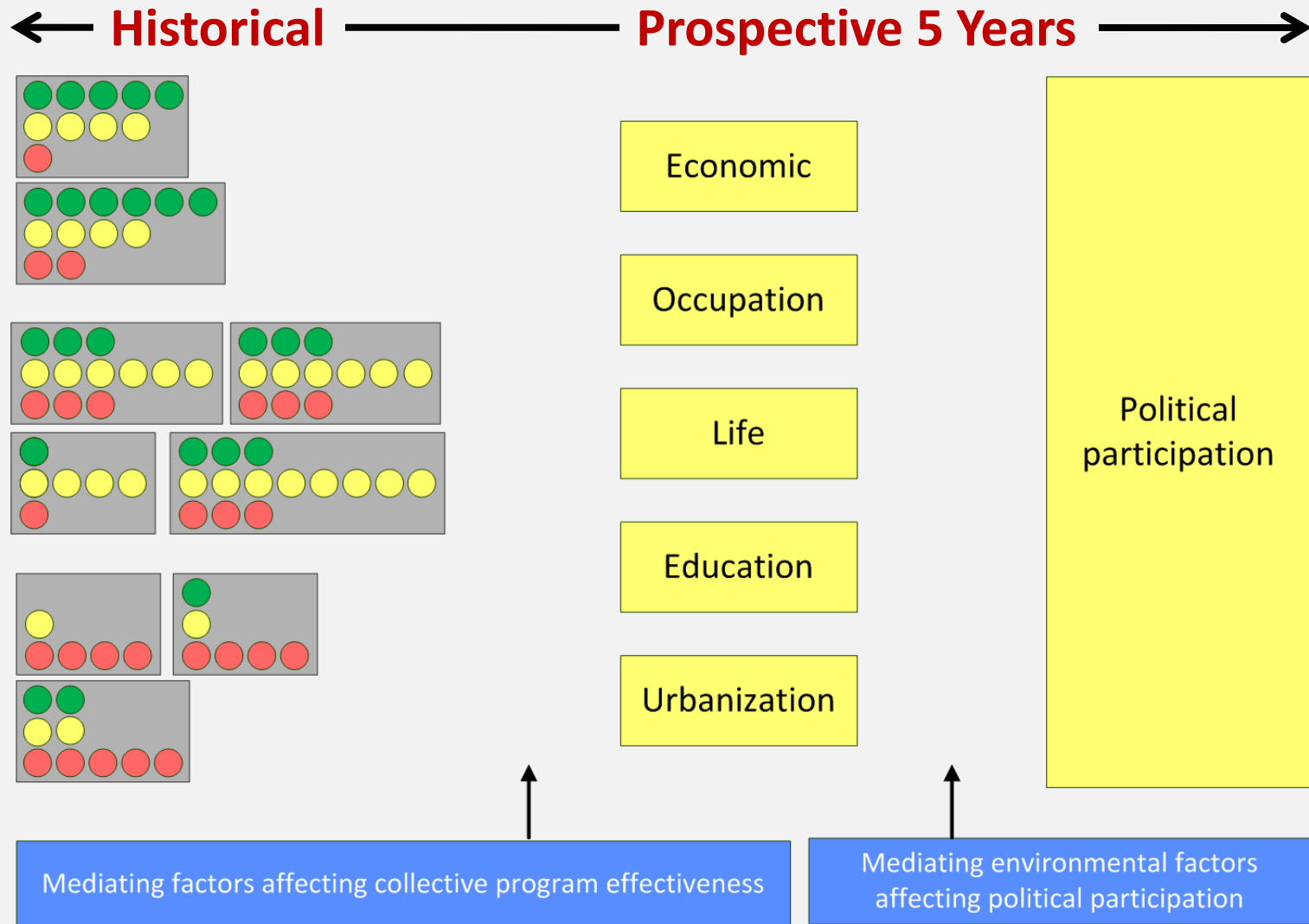


3 Group by geographical area and clusters of areas to compare impact



What would the evaluation look like?

Date & Time Frame



Part 2: Exploring the Example

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

Why is my example problematic?

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

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

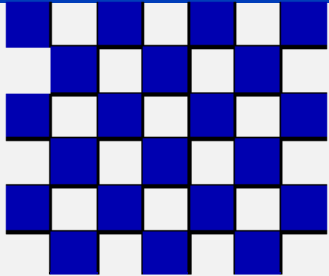
Methods are well known

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

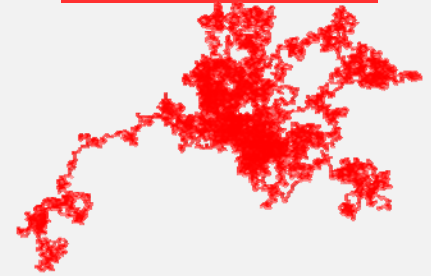
All we can do today is illustrate a small piece of the method

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

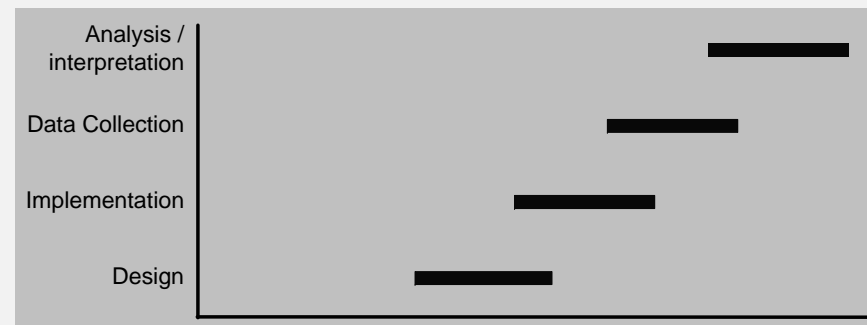
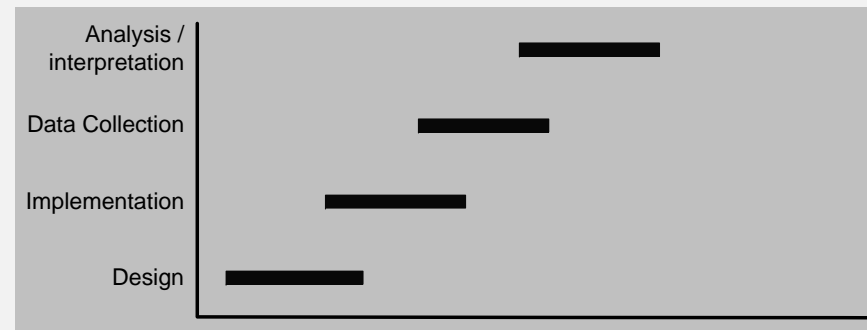
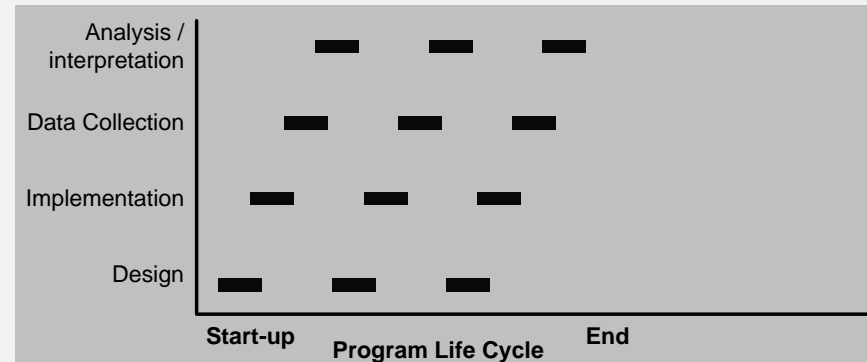
- Continuous process improvement
- Short time between cause and effect = inference with simpler methodology
- Inherently sensitive to surprise

1:1 Correspondence between life cycles

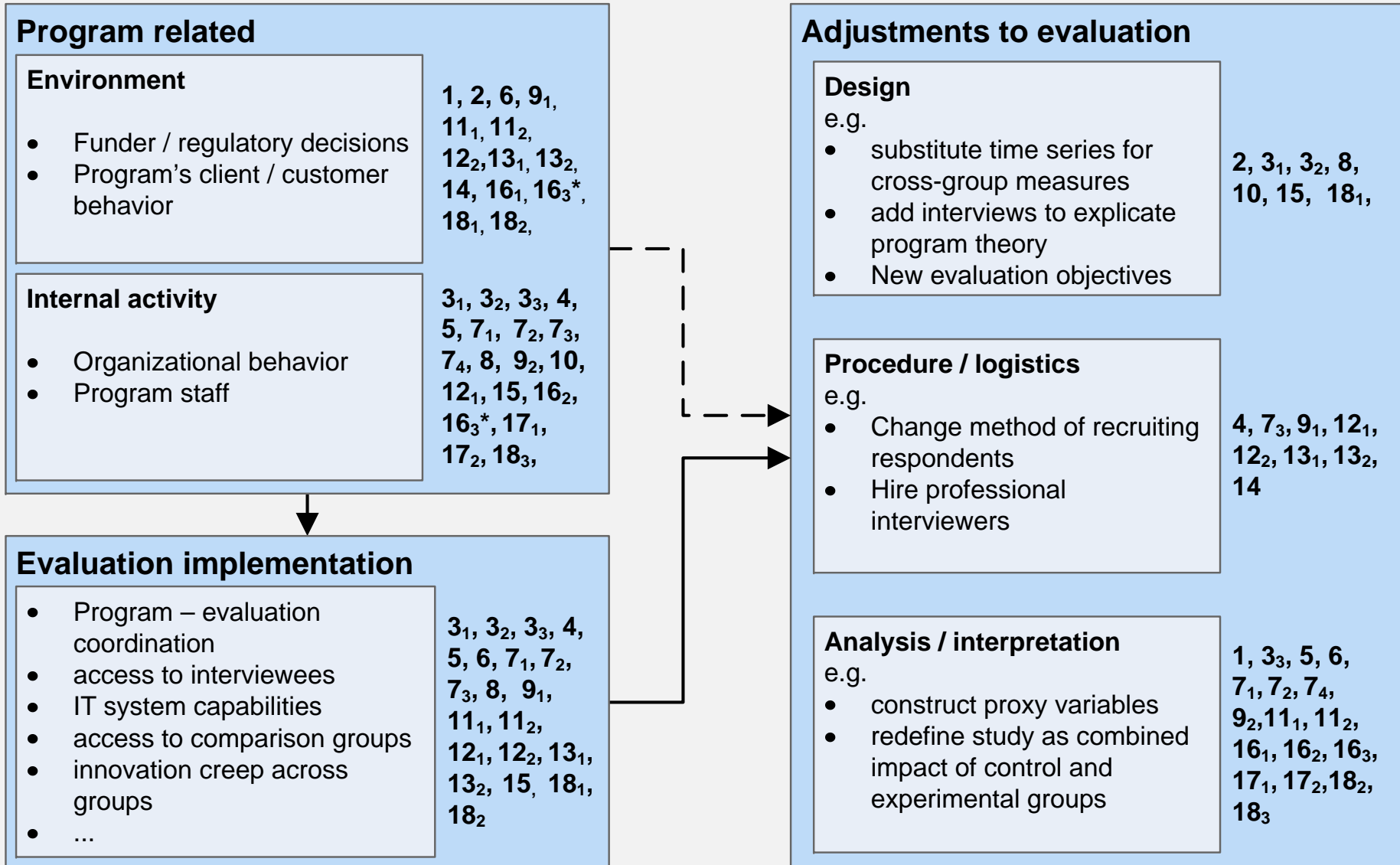
- Fog of start up
- Surprise late in program life cycle can force early stage evaluation redesign
- *Gets worse when design and data requirements must be stable over time*

Retrospective focus

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

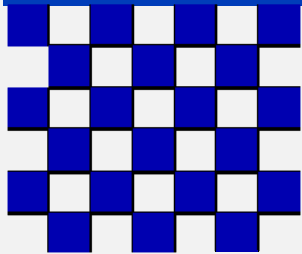


Framework 3: Social/Organizational Sources of Surprise



Examples of Problems Along the Continuum

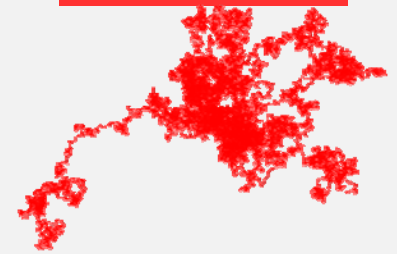
Foreseeable



Respect Data.

Trust judgment.

Unforeseeable



From case studies

Clinic user fees – Niger

Tight integration, evaluation
and service delivery

Refugee resettlement

From development → democracy example

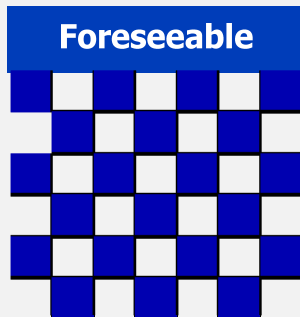
Disease specific vs.
health system
improvement

Interactions among
development programs
can be ignored

Abrupt change in donor
foreign aid policy

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Evaluation Tactics to Solve the Problem



Respect Data.



Trust judgment.

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...

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

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