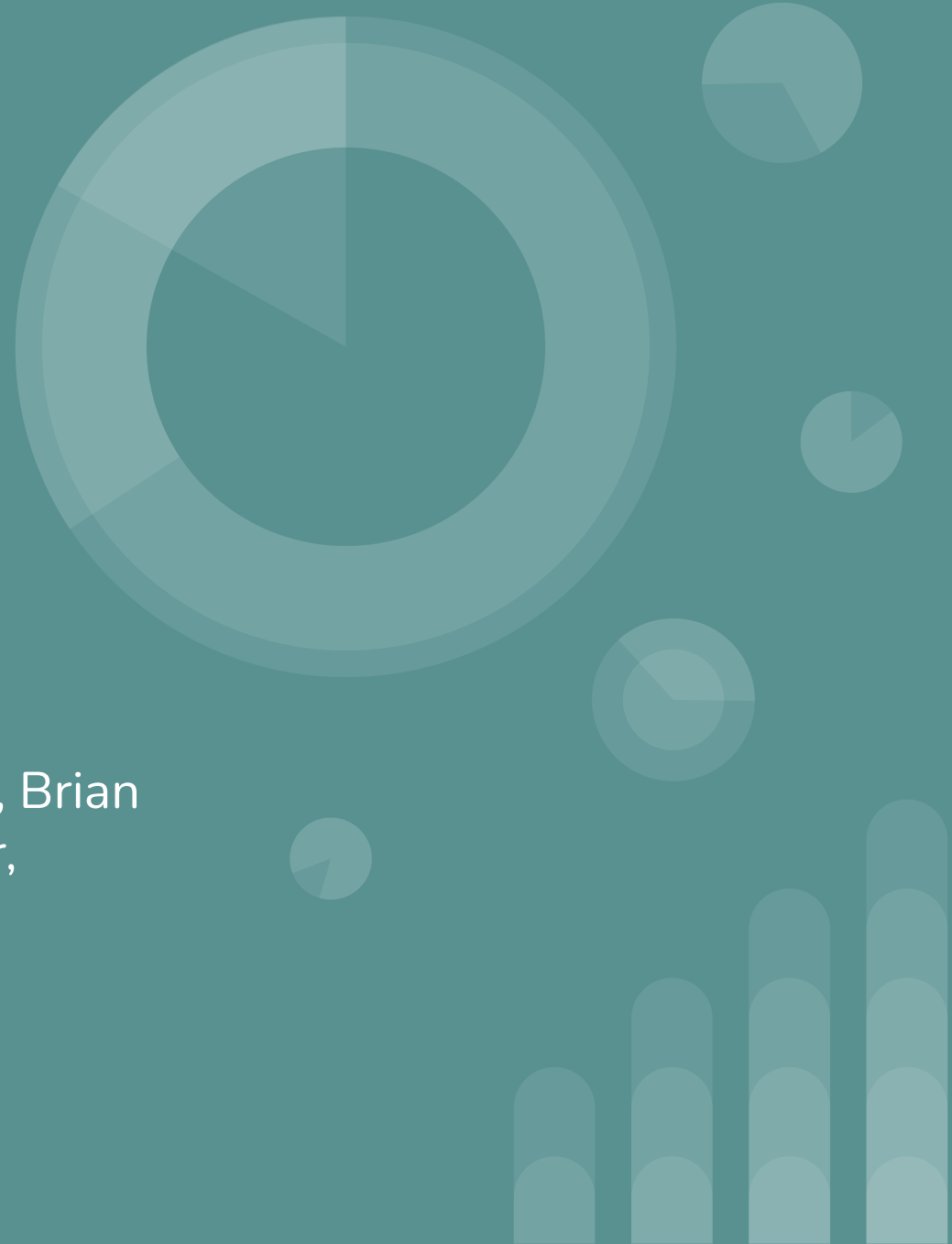


# **Social Science Research and Evaluation: Equitable Approaches to DEAI Efforts**

Webinar: July 24, 2024

Speakers: Jerry Luebke, Julianne Turner, Peter Kalenda, Brian Ogle, Amy Niedbalski, Kelly Riedinger, Marisa Shender, Brian Slattery



# Welcome!

During this webinar we plan to discuss various approaches to social science research and evaluation that will facilitate and support DEAI efforts within AZA institutions and neighboring communities.

Emphasizing those who may be discriminated against or marginalized based on race/ethnicity, religion, gender expression, sexual orientation, geographical location, socioeconomic status, age, or disability.



# Meet the Speakers



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# SSRE SAG Steering Committee

## Applications due Sunday, August 4

### Subcommittees

- Professional Development and Communication
- Ethical and Equitable Practices
- Collaboration (and SAFE PACT)

[Steering Committee Application](#)



# AZA Social Science Research Agenda (SSRA)

## Key Research Question #1:

How can zoos and aquariums help build a more equitable society through critical reflection on their internal operations, culture, and communications? How can zoo and aquarium DEAI efforts support this?

# AZA Accreditation Standard 7.9



The institution must follow a written diversity, equity, access, and inclusion program. Programs must be proactive and transparent, **with measurable goals for assessing progress**, and must have a paid staff member(s) or committee responsible for oversight.

[AZA Accreditation Standards](#)

# IMLS Award: *REDEFINE*



VSA will update their **Evaluator Competencies!**

Current framework (established 2009) does not currently incorporate skills and dispositions for equity-focused evaluation practices.

Project activities:

- review of best practices
- listening sessions with a range of stakeholders
- an iterative, participatory design and development process
- pilot-testing of dissemination and training strategies

Result will be a toolkit, self-assessment tool and self-training modules

*To learn more: [redefine@visitorstudies.org](mailto:redefine@visitorstudies.org)*

[REDEFINE](#)

# History of Zoo & Aquarium Evaluation Methods

## Standard Approaches

Surveys  
Interviews  
Focus Groups

Each method can be useful, but they also contain pitfalls to be aware of.



# Surveys



## The shortcomings

Language barriers

Literacy barriers

Navigation and Usability

# Interviews



## The shortcomings

Language barriers

Biases of both interviewer and interviewee

Accessibility for communication disabilities

# Focus Groups



## The shortcomings

Participant Variety/ Selection Bias

Conformity Bias

Accessibility for communication  
disabilities

# Traditional Evaluation Approaches

**Program  
improvement  
evaluation  
(formative)**



**Program impact  
evaluation  
(summative)**

Note: These types of evaluation approaches are generally planned, designed and carried out by a person/team who is not part of the project or program design and delivery team.

# Participatory Evaluation

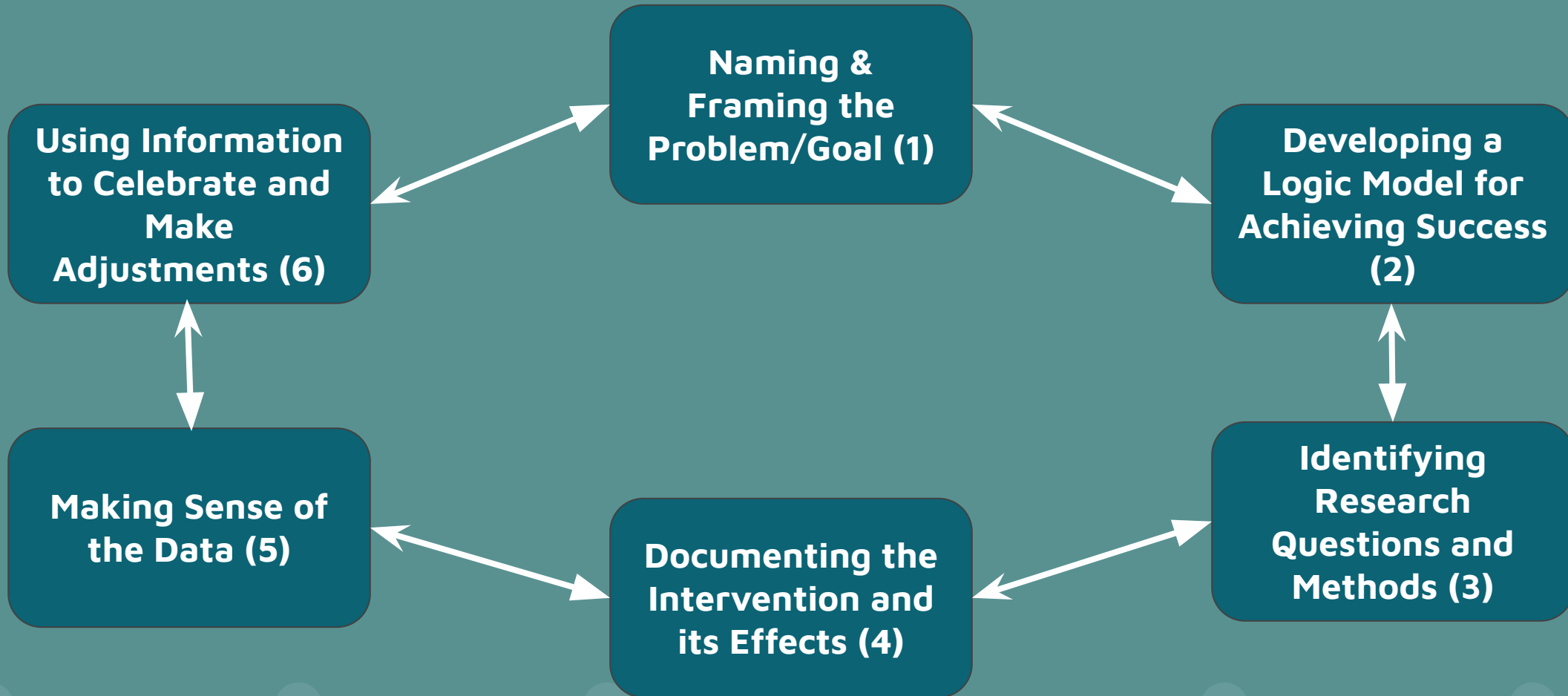
The planning, design, and delivery of a participatory evaluation focuses on the involvement of key stakeholders, especially the intended beneficiaries or target audiences of a project, program, or service.

Participatory evaluation methods are related to other evaluation approaches that go by different names:

- Collaborative evaluation
- Empowerment evaluation
- Equitable evaluation
- Transformational evaluation
- Culturally responsive evaluation
- Utilization evaluation
- Developmental evaluation

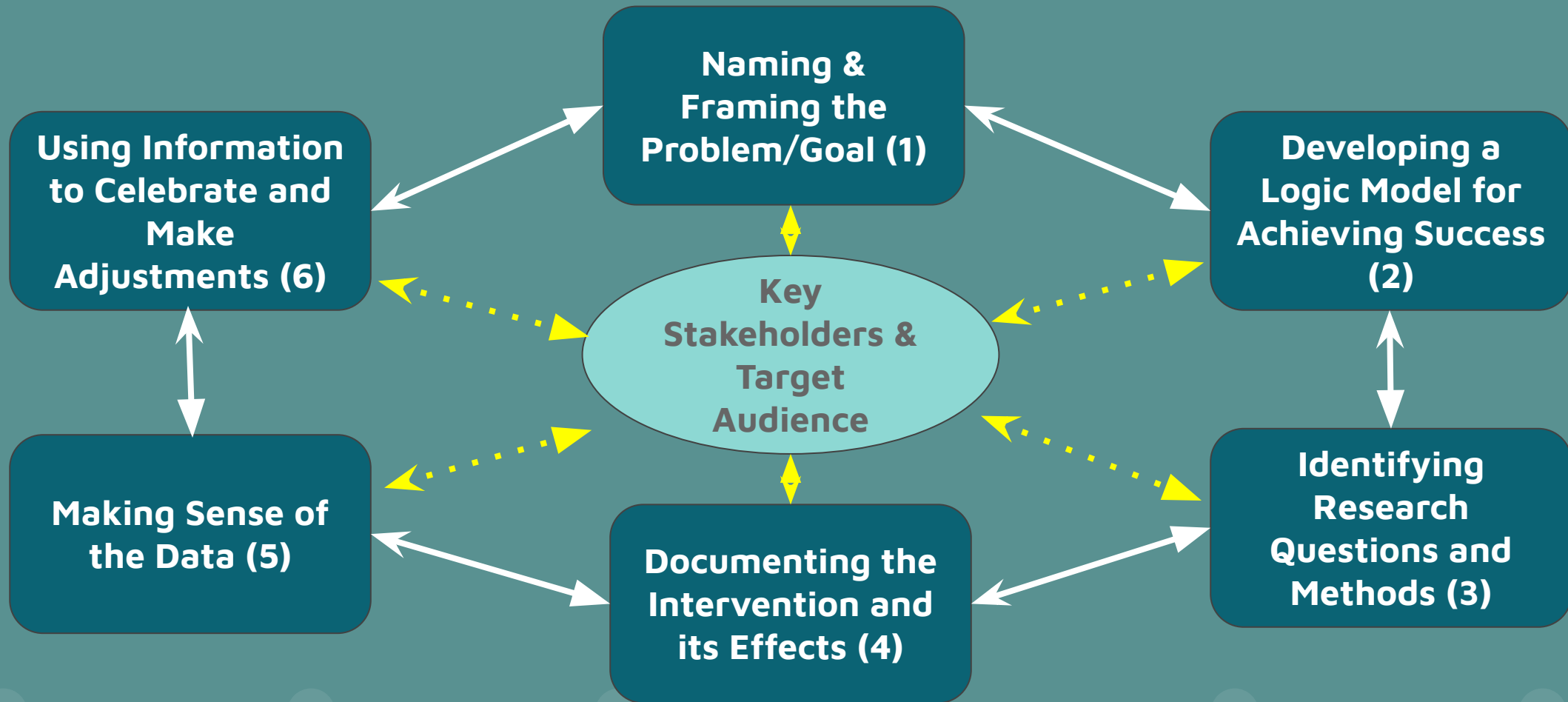


# Traditional Evaluation Cycle



Adapted from: Fawcett S.B., et. al. (2003). Building capacity for participatory evaluation within community initiatives. *Journal of Prevention & Intervention in the Community*, 26(2), 21-36.

# Participatory Evaluation Cycle

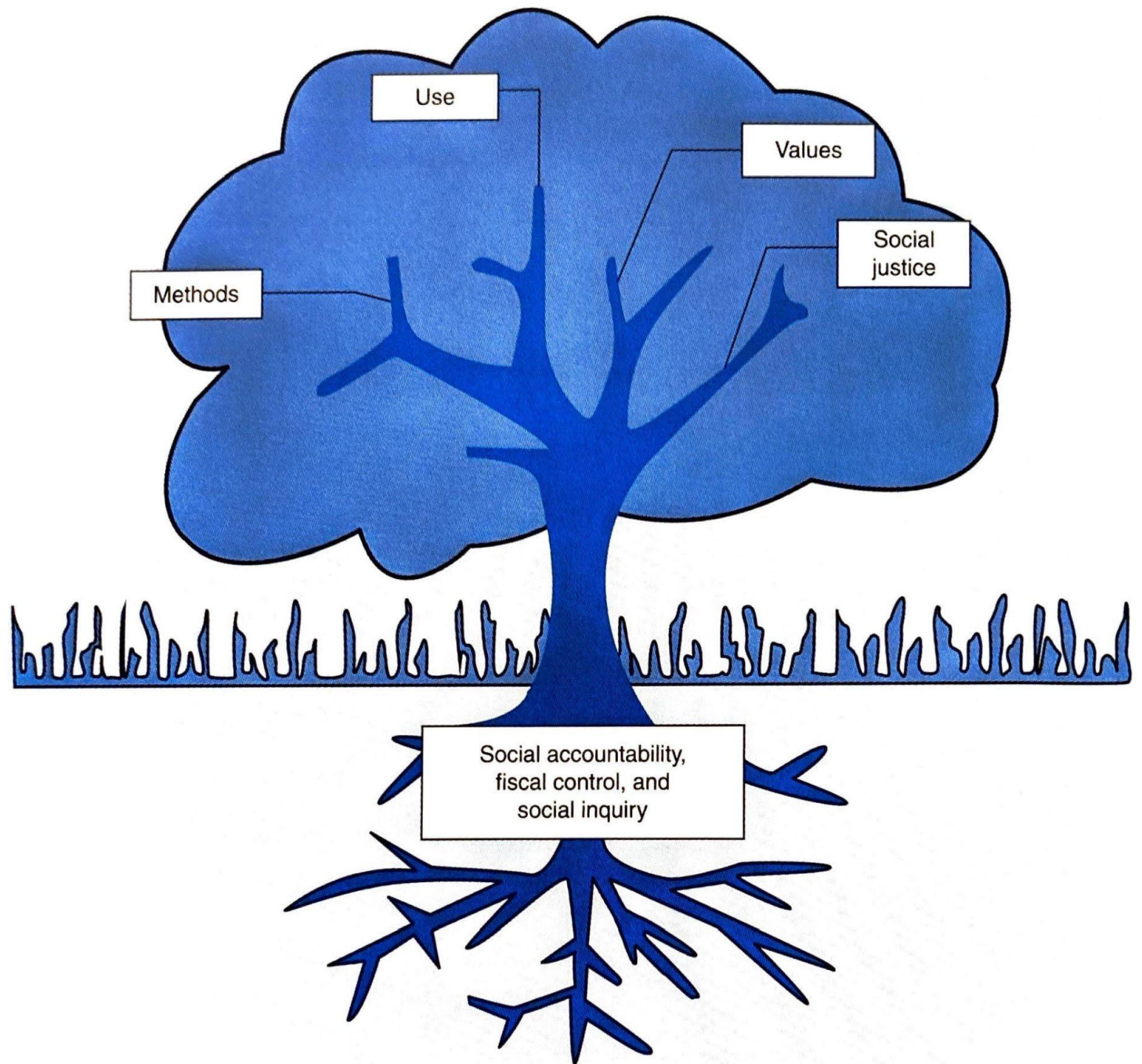


Adapted from: Fawcett S.B., et. al. (2003). Building capacity for participatory evaluation within community initiatives. *Journal of Prevention & Intervention in the Community*, 26(2), 21-36.



# Evaluation Theory Tree

**Mertens & Wilson, (2019)**  
Program Evaluation Theory &  
Practice: A Comprehensive  
Guide (2nd Ed.)





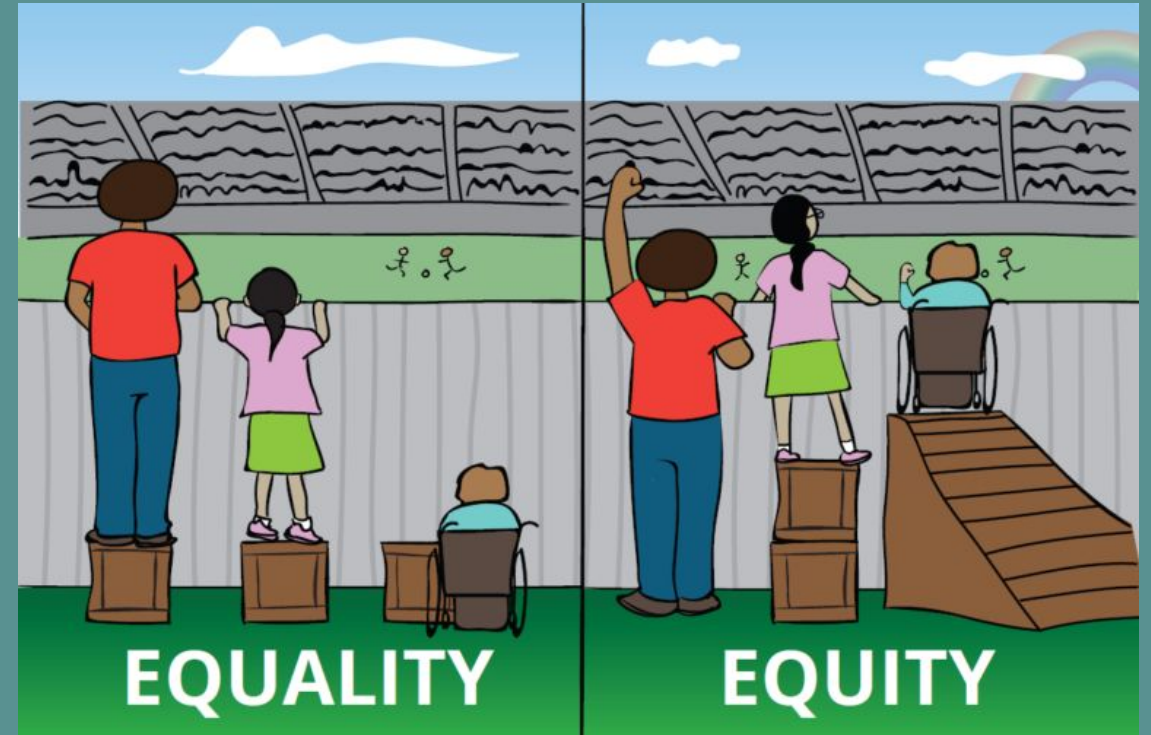
# Social Justice-Oriented Evaluation Framework & Paradigms

(Thomas & Campbell, 2021)

- **Transformative Evaluation (Mertens, 2009)**
- **Empowerment Evaluation (Fetterman, 1994)**
- **Feminist Evaluation (Sielbeck-Bowen, et. al., 2002)**
- **Participatory Evaluation (Shapiro, 1988)**
- **Deliberative Democratic Evaluation (House & Howe, 2000)**
- **Collaborative Evaluation (O'Sullivan, 2012)**

# How to Develop Equitable Approaches

1. Prepare for the Project
2. Engage Partners
3. Identify the Purpose
4. Frame Questions with Care
5. Design the Study or Evaluation
6. Assess Outcomes for Future Studies

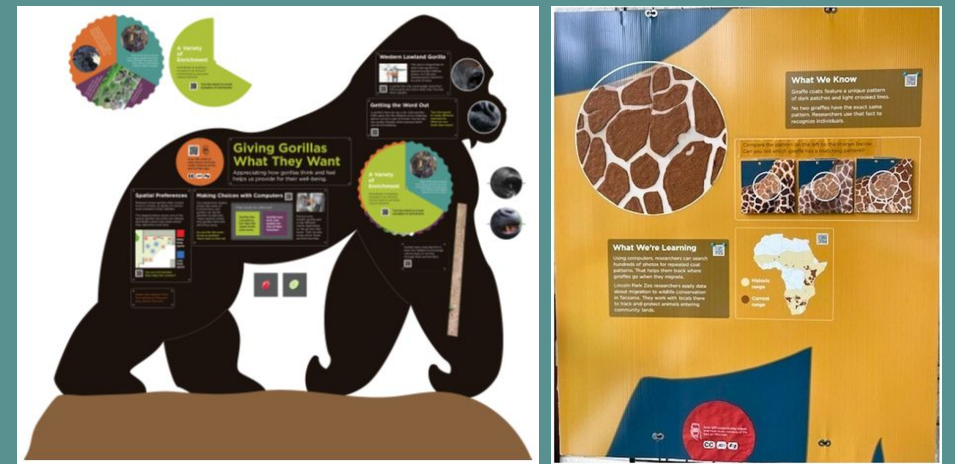


# Lincoln Park Zoo IMLS Signage Study

*“The whole zoo experience has always been predicated on a visual experience: ‘if you’ve seen it, you’ve done it.’ Is there a way to challenge this, broaden what it means to experience the zoo...” –LPZ Learning staff member*

## MA-249076-OMS-21 Inclusive Interpretives

- Co-creating accessible signage with members of Chicago-area disability communities
- Initial input sessions with individuals, organizations
  - Identified interpretive needs as well as general accessibility feedback
- Six month concept & design development process for each sign
  - Iterative, collaborative discussion and prototyping





# MoZAICS Project

This material is based up work supported by the National Science Foundation grant DRL-2116026. Any opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this material are those of authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of NSF.

## Autism Community Study:

*Study objective: engage with autistic individuals to understand how they define and think about inclusion in zoos/aquariums*

## Accessible Data Collection:

- Share research questions in advance
- Offer a variety of modalities to participate (e.g., verbally, in writing, using alternative communication tools) and options (e.g., in-person or virtual);
- Analyzed readability of materials;
- Provided research information packet and accommodations menu;
- Hired community outreach coordinator;

### MoZAICS

We want to make sure that everyone can comfortably participate in our interviews. If you have a need that is not on this list, please let us know by emailing Kelly Riedinger at [kelly.riedinger@vccs.edu](mailto:kelly.riedinger@vccs.edu)

Let us know which of the following accommodations you'd like for our scheduled virtual meeting by emailing kelly before your meeting time.

#### Here's what we have planned:

- We will give you the interview questions ahead of time.
- We will give you an agenda that tells you what will happen during the interview.
- We will remind you about your interview appointment. Let us know which one you would prefer:
  - ☐ Text message (please provide contact information in your email)
  - ☐ Email
- You can have someone with you during the interview for support.
- You can choose to use only audio or turn your video on or off whenever you want.
- You can share thoughts or ideas in the chat or by creating drawings instead of speaking out loud.
- We will share a summary of results with you once we've finished writing them.

#### Before the meeting:

- ☐ We can have a casual meeting with the researcher to get to know each other.
- ☐ You can send us your responses to the question us ahead of time in writing or a recording.
- ☐ We can have a pre-meeting to test any facilitation or communication support systems you use in advance to ensure they work with the Zoom system and microphone.
- ☐ You can ask for any other accommodations you need.
- ☐ You can ask to reschedule the interview at any point.

#### During the meeting:

- ☐ We can take breaks after each question.
- ☐ You can have live captions or provide cart transcription to show what people are saying.
- ☐ We can give verbal descriptions of images.
- ☐ You can do whatever helps you feel comfortable (e.g., use fidgets).
- ☐ The interview is voluntary and you can skip any questions that make you feel uncomfortable and you can ask to end the interview at any time.
- ☐ You can ask for any other accommodations you need.

### MoZAICS

#### Getting to the Aquarium

- Our in-person interviews will take place at the Virginia Aquarium & Marine Science Center south building at 801 General Booth Blvd, Virginia Beach, VA 23451

- This building has a blue roof and an otter statue out front



- If you drive or have someone drive you, you can park in the small parking lot out front. Parking is free at this time of year.

#### Getting inside the Aquarium

- You can enter the building through the central glass doors of the building.

# Open Forum Chat - Collaborative Approaches

- What are some of the ways have you incorporated equitable approaches into your current work?
- What stood out to you so far from this webinar that you are excited to try?
- We are all learning and growing together, what are some challenges you've faced in your work?





# Open Forum Chat - Collaborative Approaches

## Potential Challenges

- Collaborative approaches may require additional time, funding, or resources to execute.
- Community partners may require some coaching in specialized skills in evaluation methodology (i.e., building evaluation capacity).
- Community partners may express viewpoints that challenge the perspectives, privilege, and authority of those in power.
- Evaluation staff may not have the skills in cross-cultural sensitivity and communication required to navigate cultural divides in productive ways.
- Those in power may not see the value or benefits of collaborative approaches and may become defensive about giving up control and decision-making authority.



# Recap

**To support DEAI efforts with visitors and local communities, equitable social science research and evaluation methods should reflect the following:**

- Procedures and actions that are relevant and responsive to the social-cultural context of the target audience.
- A social justice approach that is cognizant of the underlying drivers of inequity.
- A collaborative mindset working with key stakeholders and target audience in the planning, design, implementation, and reporting of research/evaluation results.
- Overall focus on processes and outcomes that can empower marginalized individuals, groups, or communities with the tools and knowledge they need to accomplish their goals or aspirations.

# Additional Resources

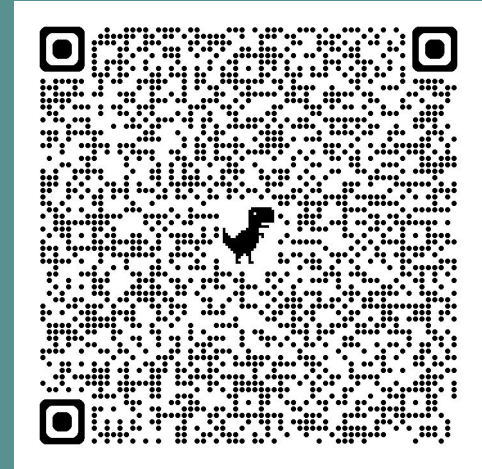
American Evaluation Association  
([www.eval.org](http://www.eval.org))

- The Collaborative, Participatory, and Empowerment (CP&E) Evaluation Topical Interest Group (TIG)

MOZAIC (Modeling Zoos and Aquariums as Inclusive Communities of Science for Autistic Individuals)

(<https://www.aza.org/MoZAICS>)

AZA Network:  
Ethical Practices  
Resource Library  
(AZA login required)





# Relevant Citations:

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