

# How to connect M&E systems and decision-making?

*The evaluator is dead. Long live the evaluator!*

Damien Sweeney

Principal Consultant



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**PRACTITIONERS FORUM**  
**ADAPTIVE PROGRAMMING AND**  
**MONITORING, EVALUATION & LEARNING**

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JUNE 5-6, 2018

The Makati Shangri-La Hotel | Philippines



COALITIONS for CHANGE

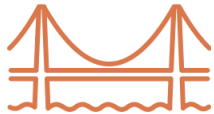
**CLEAR HORIZON**



# Overview

MEL, PMC, ToCs and ToAs

A brief history of M&E(&L)



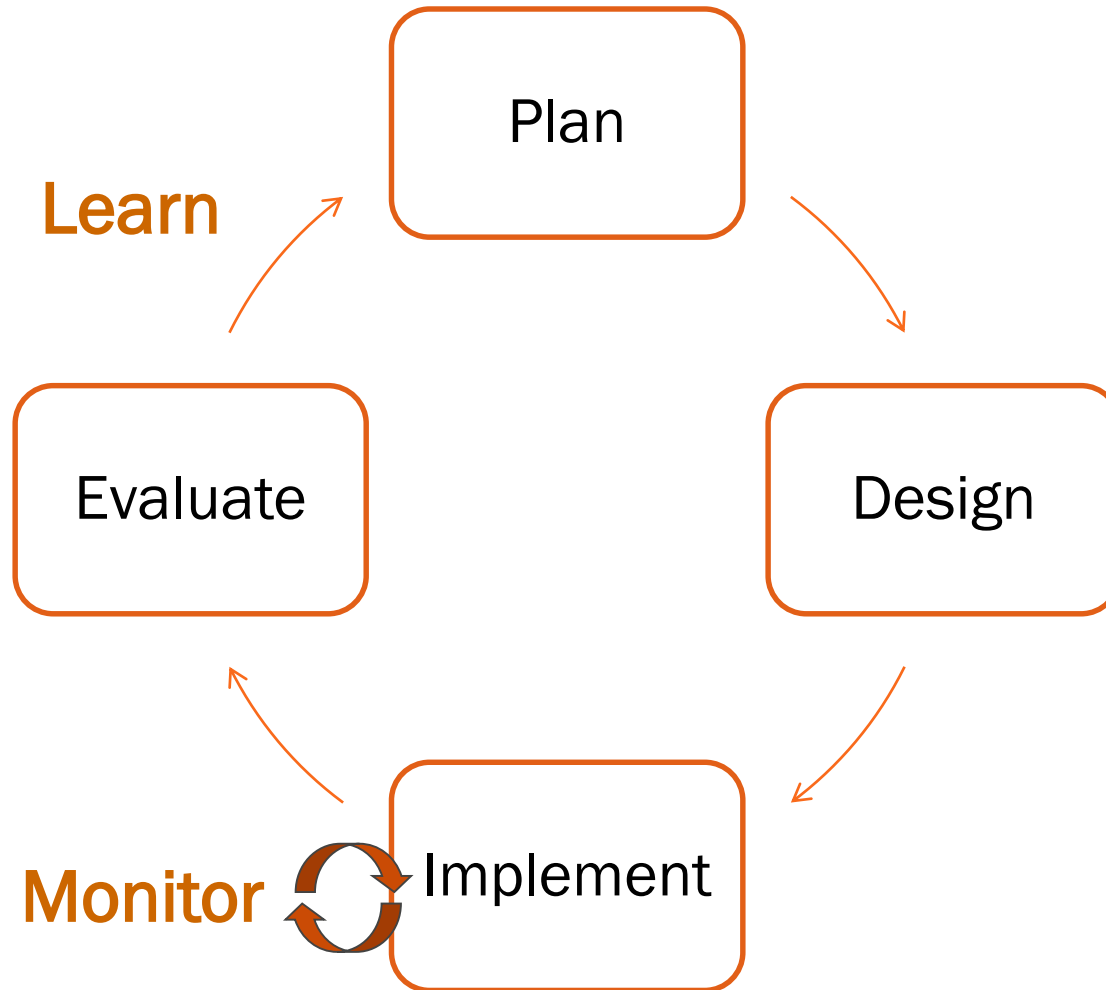
Challenges with MEL in complex programming



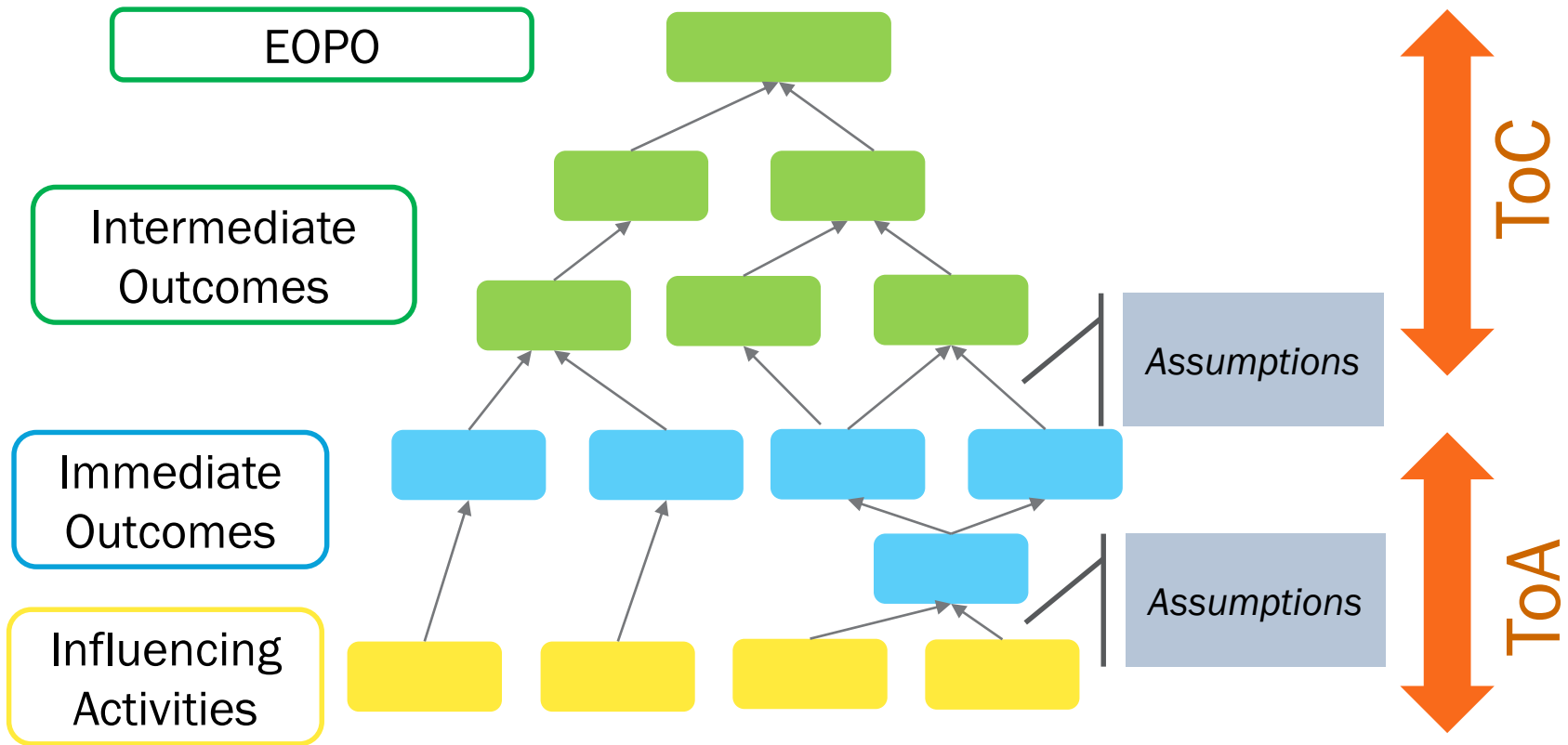
Practices to support adaptive learning/decision-making



# M&E&L and the Project Management Cycle



# Theory of Change and Theory of Action



# 1. A brief history of M&E



What's that?

It's an evaluator... they're dropping in to check up on us



Symbiotic or Parasitic?



# Learning?



So what's happened since I last parachuted in? Let's talk about what you can do better!

Where do I start..



If you were on the ground with us, all the time, you'd know!



*"The only thing to do with good advice is to pass it on. It is never of any use to oneself."*

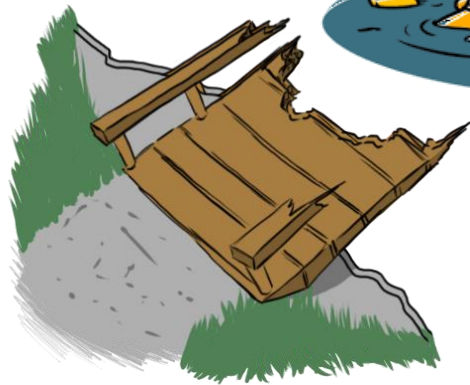
Oscar Wilde



# Avoid the Oops?

Didn't you see the gap? You're best placed to see it!

Someone should have trained you in analysing the situation?



No.. The plan shows a bridge!

We only look up and check once a quarter, if that...



## 2. Challenges with MEL in complex programming

*“No plan survives contact with the enemy”*

Helmuth von Moltke



***“There are no solutions  
to complex problems -  
Only responses”***

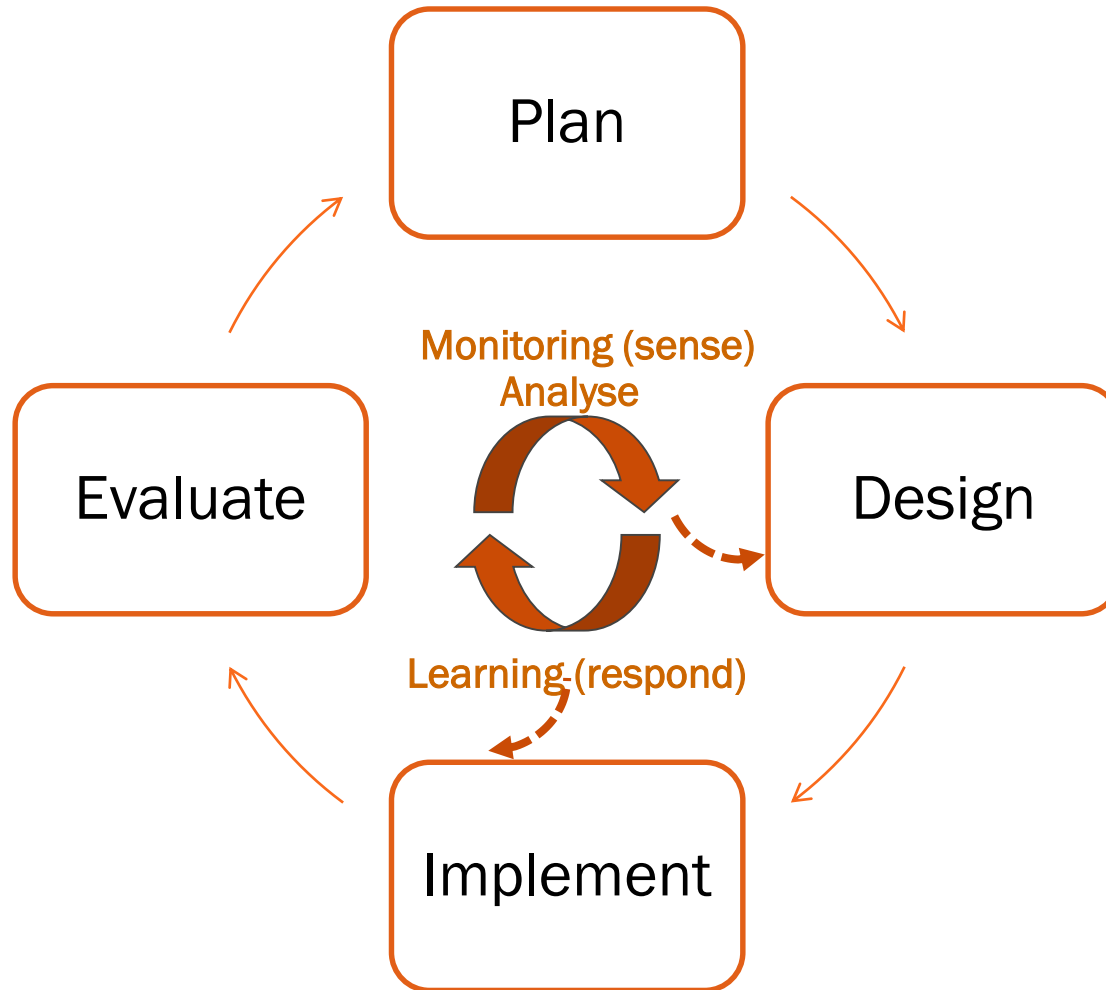
David Gurteen - <http://conversational-leadership.net/solutions-to-complex-problems/>

How well placed  
are M&E systems  
to 'sense' and  
respond (adding  
the 'L')?

ToA needs to be adaptable,  
responsive



# M&L& E and the Project Management Cycle



Design of M&E Framework / Plan



Implementation



Reporting



Learning

- Design and frameworks are complex but high quality

- Good but ad hoc and complex environment-room for improvement

- Improvement required to meet DFAT expectations and information needs

- Limited evidence exists to demonstrate are informing management decisions



*“A review of work on the development of M&E systems and processes highlights how learning is listed, alongside accountability, as an essential characteristic of such systems. Yet my experience and that of others engaged in this area is that we struggle to make this a reality in our practice.”*

Jerry Adams (2007)

Learning and Accountability: A Monitoring & Evaluation Consultant's Perspective. Praxis Note No. 32).  
<https://www.intrac.org/wpcms/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Praxis-Note-32-Learning-and-Accountability-Jerry-Adams.pdf>

## PACC MTR (2012)

*“The MTR finds that these have not formed a satisfactory “M&E” system for the project: the emphasis has largely been on activity reporting with insufficient critical analysis and adjustment by the project executants.....The MTR recommends that a **“cultural change”** is needed, across the project and in the participating agencies (EAs and SPREP), to establish and develop PACC as primarily a **“learning and knowledge-sharing mechanism”**”.*

Pacific Adaptation to Climate Change Project MTR (2012) p9  
<https://erc.undp.org/evaluation/documents/download/6732>

# Challenges

- MEL Framework too complex, too ambitious (trying to do everything!), focussed on outputs rather than outcomes
- MEL Plan not implemented (no buy-in, too many things to do, not enough resources)
- Capacity of team not fit for the type of MEL Framework in place
- MEL team isolated from project team and management

### 3. Practices to support adaptive learning/decision-making

***“An investment in knowledge always pays the best interest.”***

Benjamin Franklin



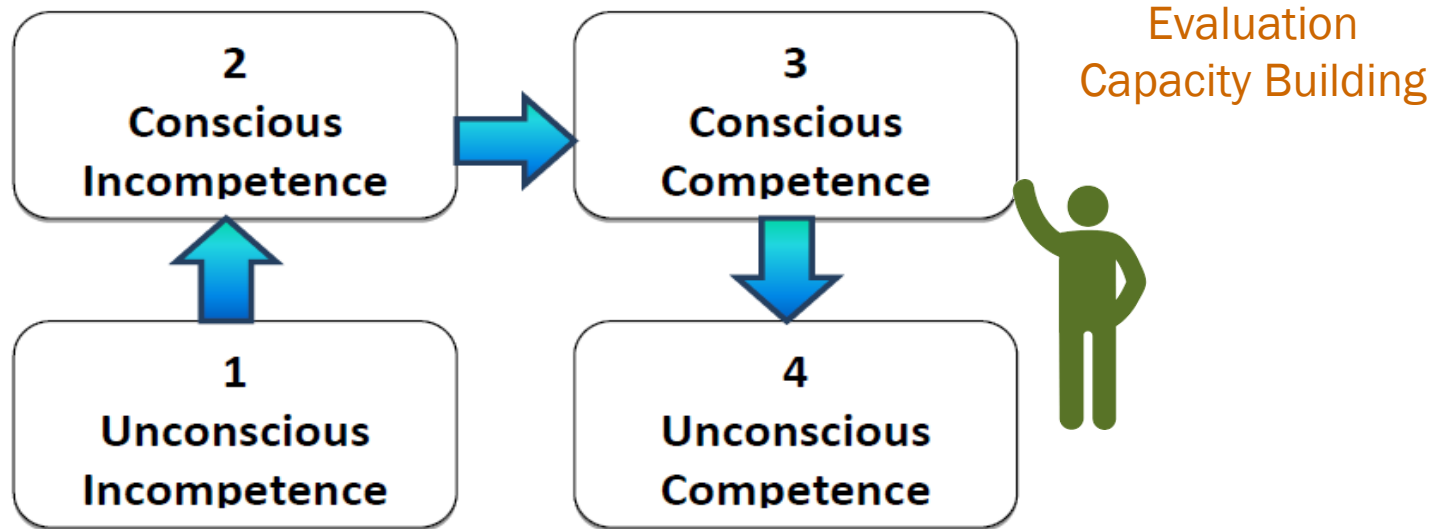
*“Research shows that over 60% of missions conducted under remote supervision within Command and Control Systems can fail to meet command intent when military **decision makers encounter the unexpected**..... We argue that mindfulness training can develop the situational awareness of the individual actor beyond a mind focused on ‘what’ we want to achieve, **into a mind constantly engaged in updating ‘how’ to achieve it**, given the evolving operational situation - a state of mind we term **Mindful Competence.**”*

Mindfulness and Situation Awareness (2011)

[https://www.researchgate.net/profile/John\\_Darwin2/publication/235091729\\_Mindfulness\\_and\\_Situation\\_Awareness/links/5513d0ac0cf2eda0df302d40/Mindfulness-and-Situation-Awareness.pdf](https://www.researchgate.net/profile/John_Darwin2/publication/235091729_Mindfulness_and_Situation_Awareness/links/5513d0ac0cf2eda0df302d40/Mindfulness-and-Situation-Awareness.pdf)



# Conscious competence learning matrix



*“If your mind is empty, it is always ready for anything, it is open to everything. In the beginner's mind there are many possibilities, but in the expert's mind there are few.”*

Shunryu Suzuki (Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind)

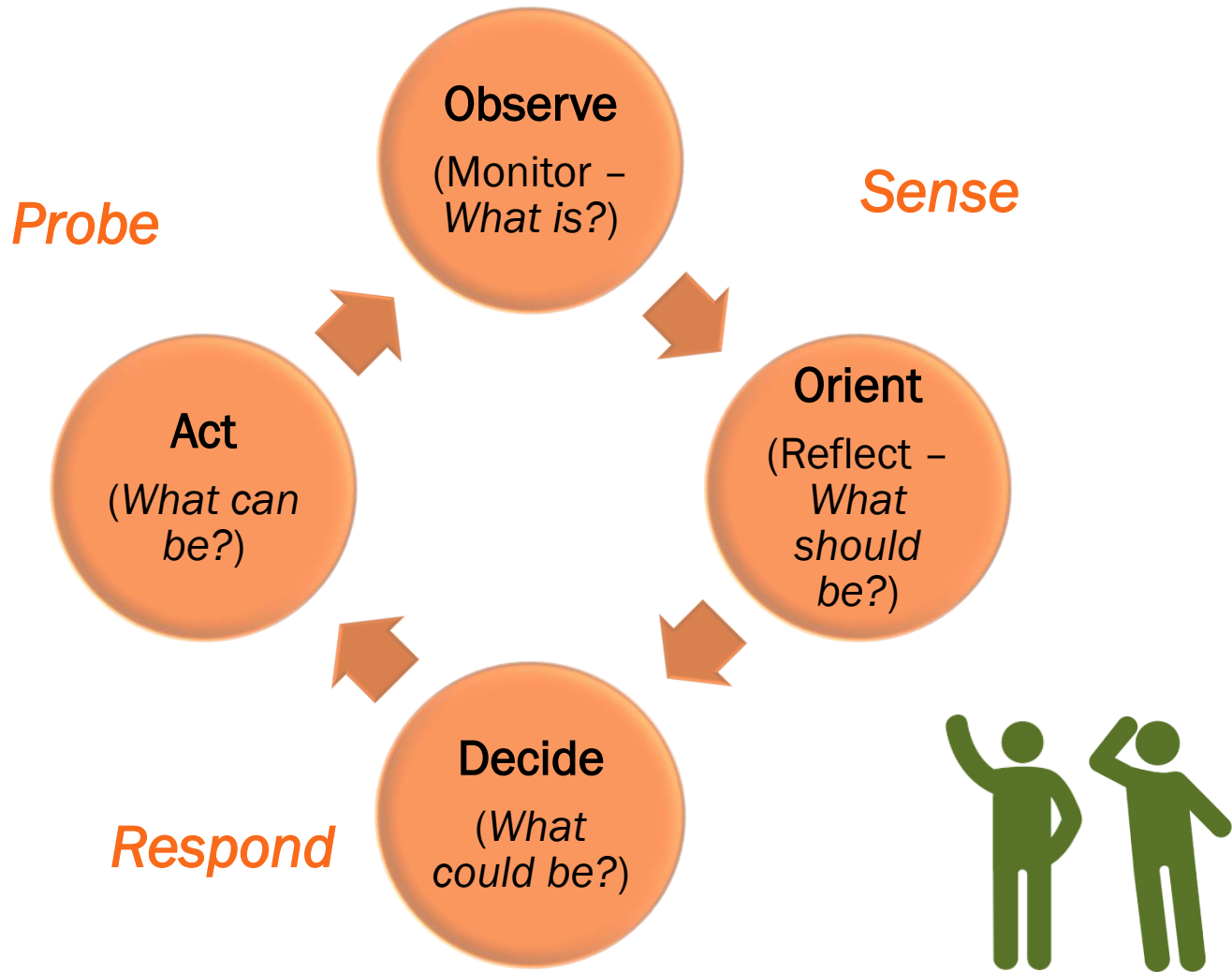


# Sense making for monitoring and learning

**Situational awareness** is being aware of what is happening around you in terms of where you are, where you are supposed to be, and whether anyone or anything around you poses a threat to you achieving your objective.



# The OODA Loop – it's not just for the military!



# Learning and Reflection



Step	Thinking process	Key question
Summarising and assembling the data / evidence	Objective	What happened?
Interpreting and judging the results	Reflective & Interpretive	So what?
Reflection: Lessons and recommendations	Decision	What now?



Come to our training on Learning & Reflection Workshops at the Australasian Evaluation Conference in Launceston, Tasmania in September 2018



# Partner-led Evaluation

Where the implementing partners play a leading role in the evaluation design, data collection, analysis and reporting. An evaluation facilitator coordinates and supports activities.

- Approach most appropriate when there is a strong focus on internal learning and capacity-building.



Working paper 527

## Partner-led evaluation for policy research programmes

A thought piece on the KNOWFOR programme evaluation

Tiina Pasanen, Stuart Raetz, John Young and Jess Dart

December 2017

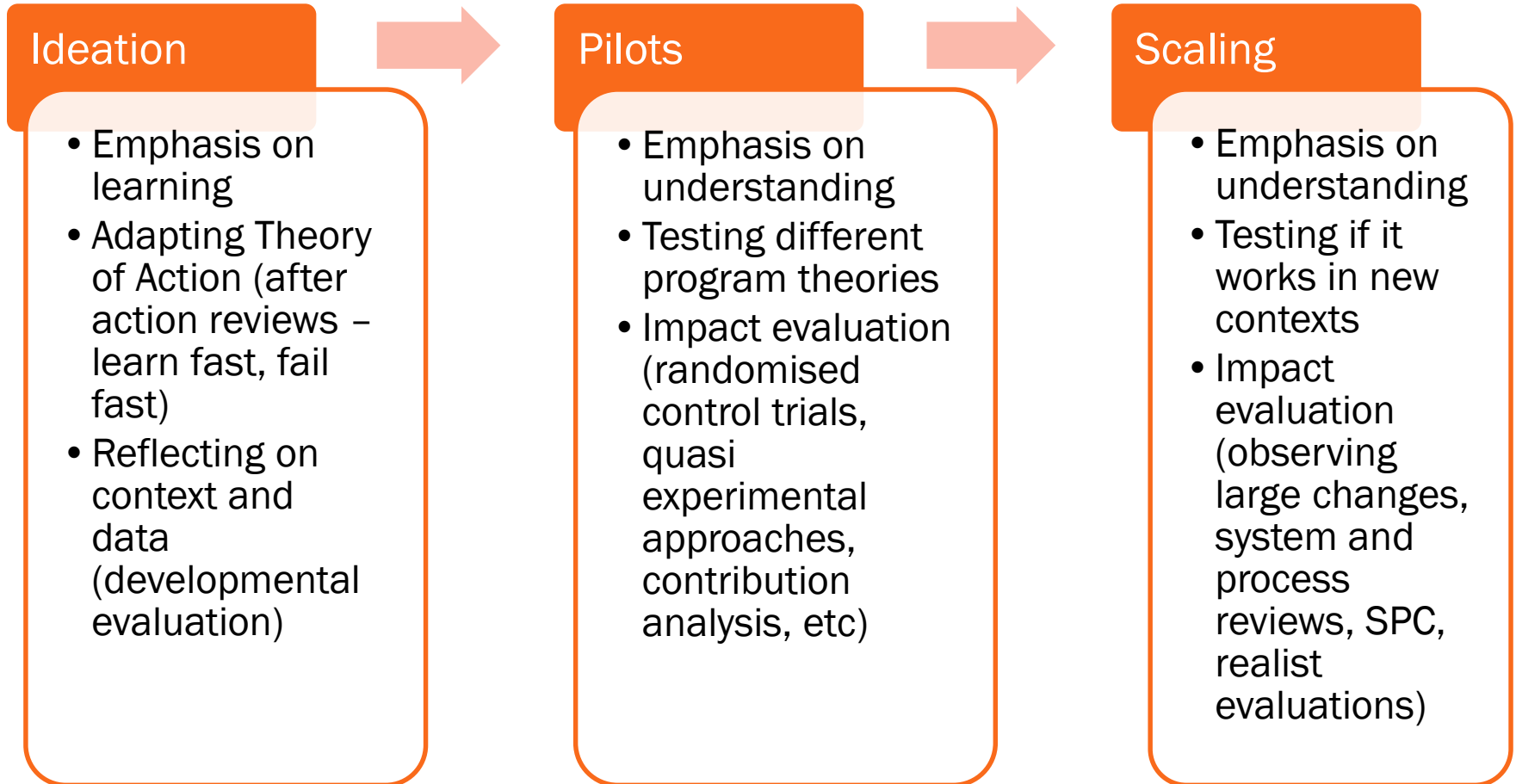
# Doing Development Differently Manifesto

Two principles of successful initiatives are:

- They blend design and implementation through **rapid cycles of planning, action, reflection and revision** (drawing on local knowledge, feedback and energy) to **foster learning from both success and failure**.
- They manage risks by making ‘small bets’: pursuing activities with promise and dropping others

Statement from the October 2014 ‘Doing Development Differently’ workshop

# MEL for Innovation: Pilots to Scale





# Challenges and how to overcome them

## Constraint

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M&E design overly complex, not fit-for-purpose

## How to overcome

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User-centred design principles that match the needs of the implementors and donors and the context/complexity, and foster learning

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Insufficient capacity and capability to implement M&E

Implement an Evaluation Capacity Building strategy from the outset

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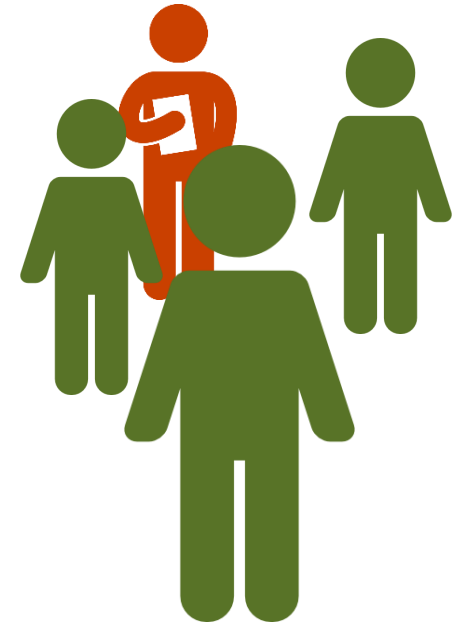
M&E data collection and reporting focussed on outputs rather than outcomes

Partner-led approaches that foster a learning culture, and implement regular learning dialogues/reflection processes

# The evaluator is dead. Long live the evaluator!



The professional evaluator  
[Coming in and out of projects]



The implementor evaluator, within a learning organisation  
[Trained in MEL, high sense of situational awareness, constantly learning and adapting, supported by the professional evaluator]



**ONE SIZE  
DOES NOT  
FIT ALL**



Von links bügeln/ iron inside out/  
repasser sur l'envers /只熨燙反面

