



Social Impact Consultants

Discovering better ways  
to solve social problems

# Developmental Evaluation: What Are You Ready to Do??

*Session Facilitators:*

Hallie Preskill, Managing Director, FSG Seattle  
and

Srik Gopalakrishnan, Director, FSG San Francisco

Grantmakers for Effective Organizations: The Learning Conference  
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## Workshop Agenda

- **Welcome and Introductions**
- **When Evaluation Made a Difference – Small Group Activity**
- **The Role of Developmental Evaluation**
- **Developmental Evaluation in Action – Case Activity**
- **Readiness for Developmental Evaluation – Self Assessment and Now What?**
- **Q and A, Wrap-Up**

# Introductions

- **At your tables, go around and introduce yourself:**
  - **Name**
  - **Organization and role**



- **Share one reason you chose to attend this particular workshop**

## When Evaluation Made a Difference - Activity

- **Choose a partner at your table**
- **Take turns interviewing one another for about 6 minutes each**
- **As the interviewer, listen carefully – don't tell your story; listen for a memorable quote; *you may ask probing questions***
- **Take notes on the handout - they will help you tell your partner's story (in 2 minutes or less)**

***A time when you were felt the evaluation was going well, and you were energized and excited about the learning being generated...***

# Foundations, Nonprofits and Corporations Are Striving to Address a Multitude of Social Issues in a Myriad of Ways



*The challenges we face are complex, dynamic, and not easily solved*

***“Curiously, people often argue that when you’re doing an intervention for the first time, you should invest heavily in a big evaluation to understand outcomes.***

***Instead, you might want to invest heavily in the process of how the thing unfolded and what you might learn to do it better next time.***

***You didn’t know what the thing was going to look like until you got it implemented, so what’s the point in designing a very structured, systematic evaluation?”***

***- Mayur Patel, Vice-President, Strategy and Assessment, Knight Foundation***

## Developmental Evaluation (DE)

An approach to evaluation that is grounded in **systems thinking** and supports **innovation** by collecting and analyzing **real time data** in ways that lead to informed and ongoing **decision making** as part of the design, development, and implementation process.

- Michael Q. Patton

*DE is particularly suited for innovative approaches to solving social problems where the path to success is not clear*



# Matching the Question to the Evaluation Approach

Did it work? = ***Summative***

How is it working? = ***Formative***

What is it?\* = ***Developmental***

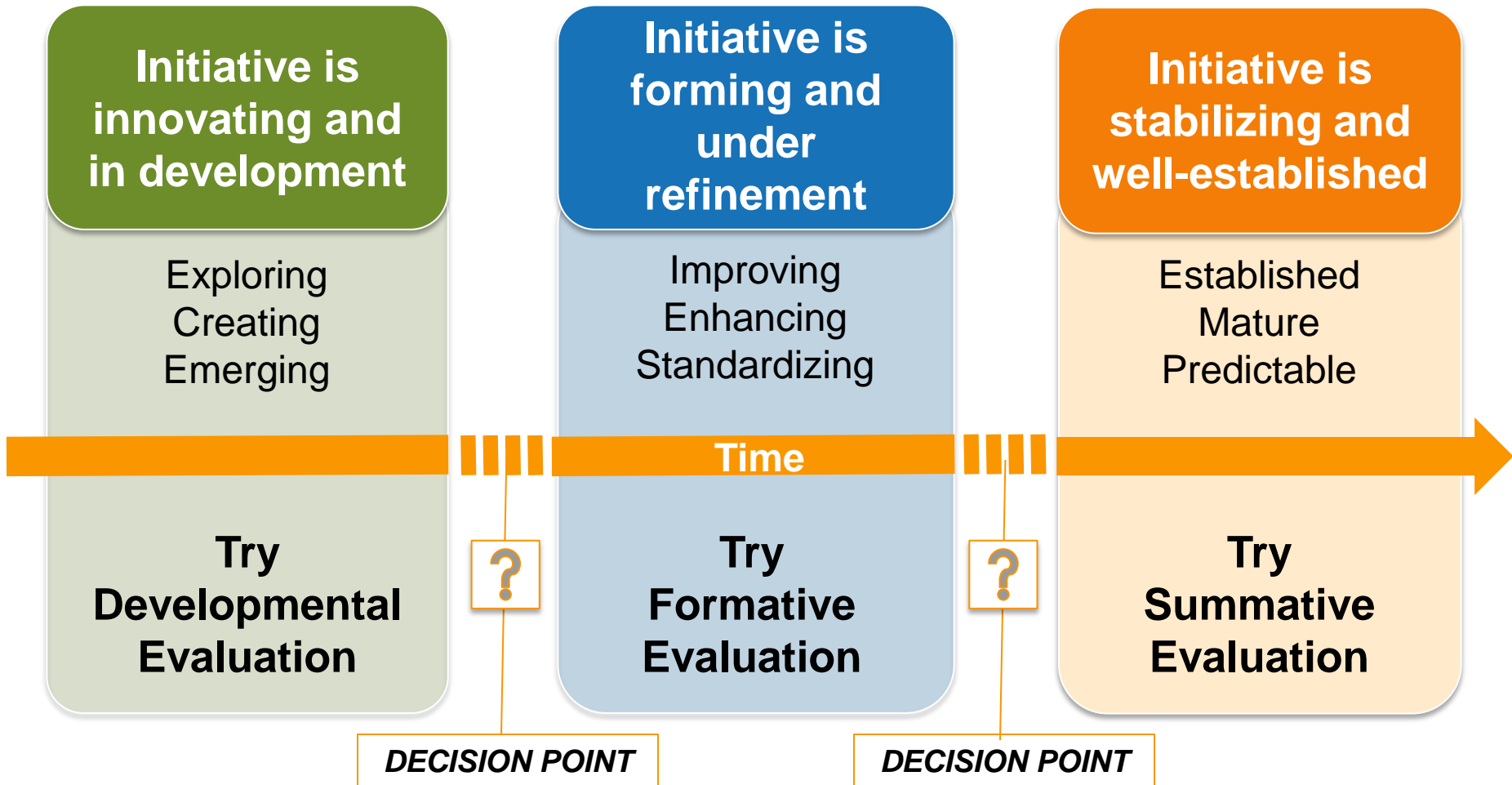
**ACT...EVALUATE...PLAN**

***The role of the evaluator in a developmental evaluation is a “friendly thorn”***

\*Source: John Cawley, J. W. McConnell Family Foundation



## Developmental Evaluation Represents a Different Way to Engage in Evaluation



***Developmental evaluation requires a certain level of readiness and commitment to learning***

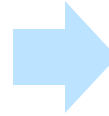
# Developmental Evaluation Asks Different Kinds of Questions

- What is **developing or emerging** as the innovation takes shape?
- What **variations** in effects are we seeing?
- What do the **initial results** reveal about expected progress?
- What elements merit **more attention** or changes?
- How is the larger system or environment **responding** to the innovation?
- How should the innovation be **adapted** in response to changing circumstances?



# When to Use Developmental Evaluation

- For initiatives that ***develop in an ongoing way*** and will never settle into a fixed model



## Knight Foundation

- *Community Information Challenge*  
Funding CFs to be leaders in news and information

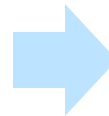
- When ***exploring the creation of a new model***, the basic ingredients of which are not yet known



## Grand Rapids Community Foundation

- *Challenge Scholars*  
Scholarships plus innovative "wrap-around" supports starting in 5th grade

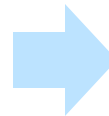
- When ***replicating a program*** in a new site, context, or population that requires adaptation



## Sherwood Foundation

- *Freedom Writers*  
Training program teaches educators to empower students - replicate in new school districts

- For ***systems change initiatives*** that seek to trigger change across multiple systems or in a particularly complex system



## Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

- *Community Partnerships Portfolio*  
Place-based, multi-year, multi-sector partnership, to increase postsecondary completion rates for low income young adults

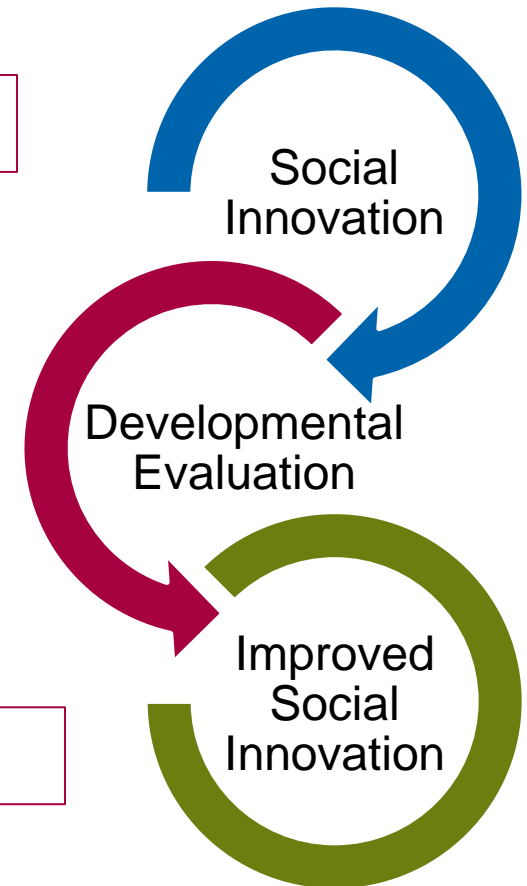
# Developmental Evaluation Involves Working Closely Together to Enhance Learning and Decision Making

***Context Analysis***

***Feedback Loops***

***Learning Facilitation***

***Ongoing Sense-Making***



***The nature of social innovation requires this integrated, responsive, and adaptive evaluation practice***

# Developmental Evaluation is a Balancing Act

- Balancing **accountability** and **learning**
- Balancing **rigor** with **timely information**
- Balancing the role of the evaluator;  
**critical friend/objective observer**
- Balancing **reflection and dialogue** with  
**decision making and action**
- Balancing the need for a **fixed budget**  
**and the need for budget flexibility**
- Balancing expectations about **who is**  
**expected to adapt and change** –  
funders and/or grantees



# Developmental Evaluation In Practice

- **Systems mapping**, exploring the various “systems” and how they are connected
- **Timelines and “desired realities”** of how things take shape
- **Adaptive evaluation plans** to address new questions, new contexts, new insights
- **Developing baselines**, knowing outcomes and indicators will change
- **Bi-weekly or monthly learning calls and meetings**, often supported by learning briefs/ learning memos
- **Non-traditional data collection methods** (informal conversations, World Café, social networking analysis)
- **Facilitated conversations and retreats** to engage in dialogue, reflect on learnings, and “untie knots iteratively”\*

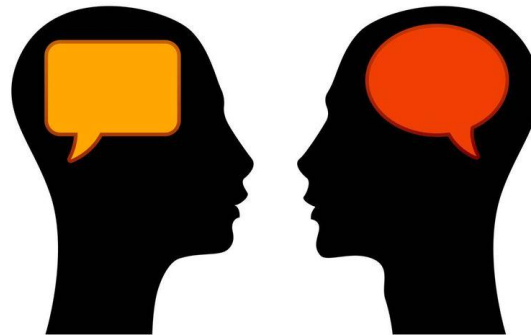
\*Langlois, Blanchet-Cohen, & Beer (2013). Art of the Nudge: Five Practices for Developmental Evaluators, *Canadian Journal of Program Evaluation*

# Are We Ready for Developmental Evaluation??

## 1. Complete the Self-Assessment survey

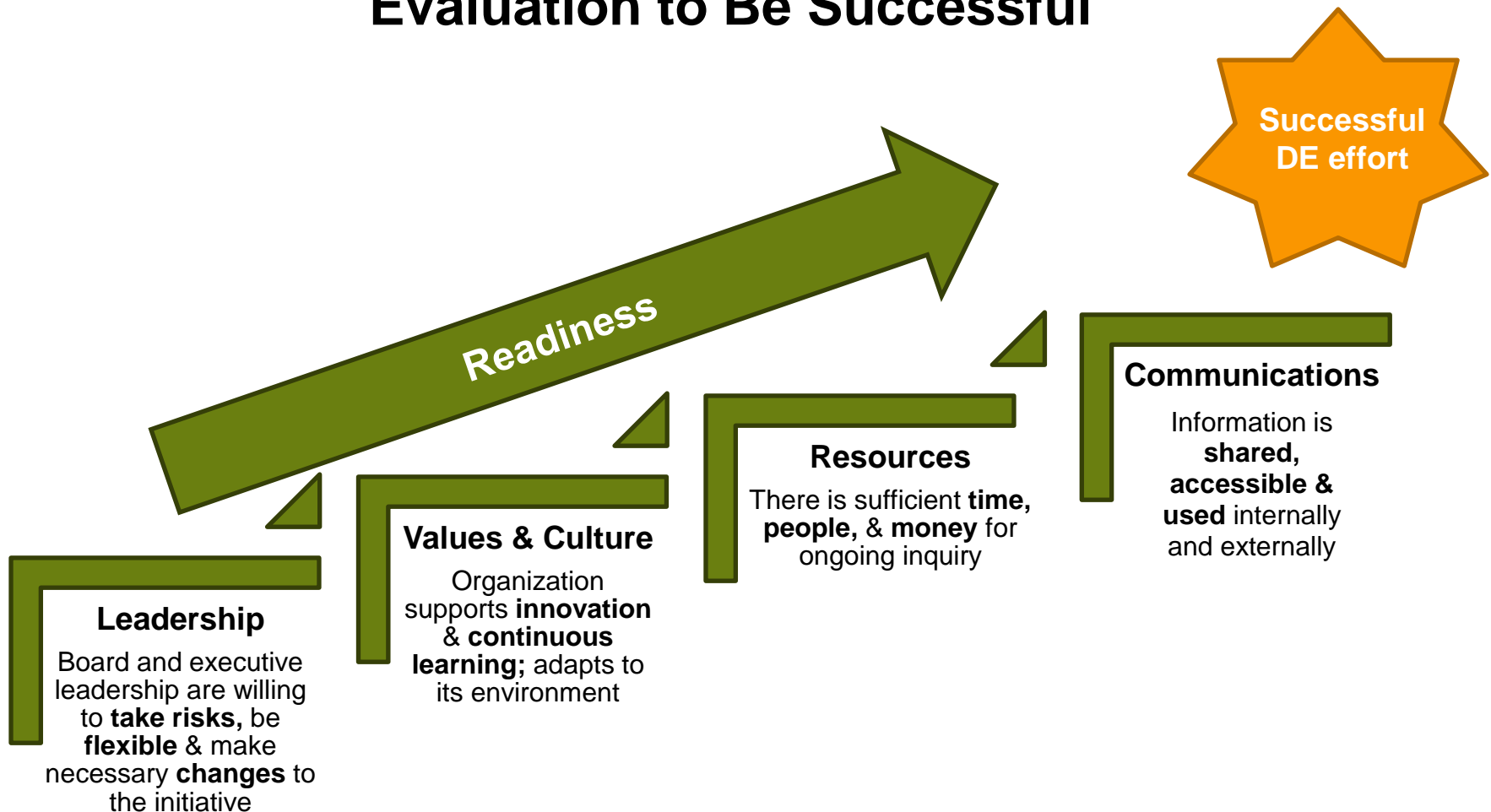


## 2. In groups of 2-3 discuss any revelations, surprises and/or implications





# Certain Conditions Are Necessary for a Developmental Evaluation to Be Successful



***Developmental evaluation requires an authentic commitment to ongoing learning, change, and development***

## Now What?

- **On the self-assessment survey, in the box labeled “to-do”, write down 2-3 next steps for determining what role developmental evaluation may have in your organization**



## Closing Thoughts

  
**emergent**



**So, what ARE you ready to do?**