

From Scattered to Strategic:

# **A Practical Workshop on Measuring What Matters**



December 2025



## Hi, I'm Gabe Cohen.

- Leads Growth and Partnerships at True Impact
- 12+ years in the nonprofit/philanthropic sector
- Lives in DC with wife and 3 kids (2 humans, one dog)
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## Hi, I'm Sara Ansell.

- Leads Analytics and Innovation at True Impact
- 15+ years in the nonprofit/ philanthropic sector
- Lives in Madison, WI with husband and 4 kids (2 humans, two dogs)
- [linkedin.com/in/sara-ansell/](https://www.linkedin.com/in/sara-ansell/)



# What's the impact of a paintbrush?



# The Impact of Knowing **Your Impact**

## Prove your Impact



### Drive Business and Social Value

Make a difference on the issues that matter most to your company and your community.



### Substantiate Your Work

Put real numbers behind your efforts to increase trust with all stakeholders.



### Tell Better Stories

Support your nonprofit partners by giving them numbers to pair with their stories.

## Improve your Impact



### Maximize Your Impact

Do more of what works, and fix (or exit) what doesn't.



# At True Impact, we're building a social sector guided by impact-driven insights.

**7,000+ NPO Programs Measured**  
\$1.5 trillion in nonprofit activities tracked  
resulting in 314 million impacts



**200+ Funders Supported**  
Increasing trust and improving their  
decision making and storytelling



**One Emerging Impact Network**  
Our connections with major charitable  
platforms benefit nonprofits and the sector



*More partners to be announced in 2026*

# True Impact: A Purpose Built Impact Measurement Platform

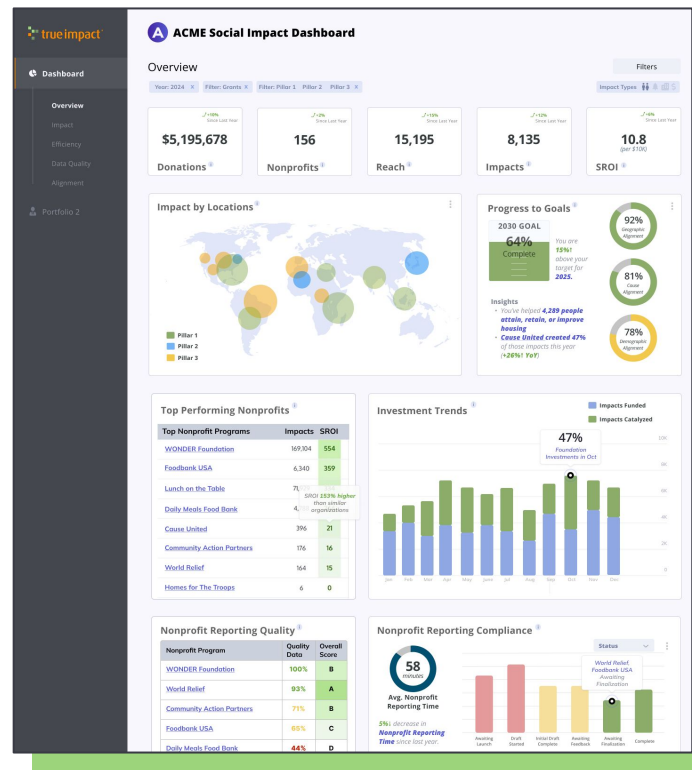
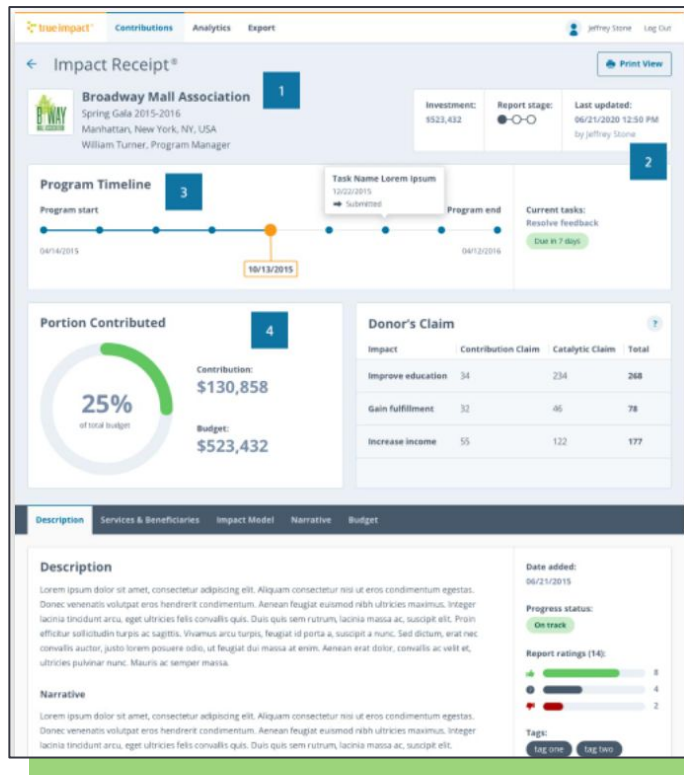
## Universal Nonprofit Impact Reports

Nonprofit Program = 97 people improve health



## Custom Donor Impact Dashboards

\$2M donations = 45,000 impacts



## Donors and Nonprofits:



### Prove Value

Attract, retain support with robust data & storytelling



### Save Time

Slash administrative demands with standardized reporting



### Increase ROI

Improve investment decisions with benchmarking insights

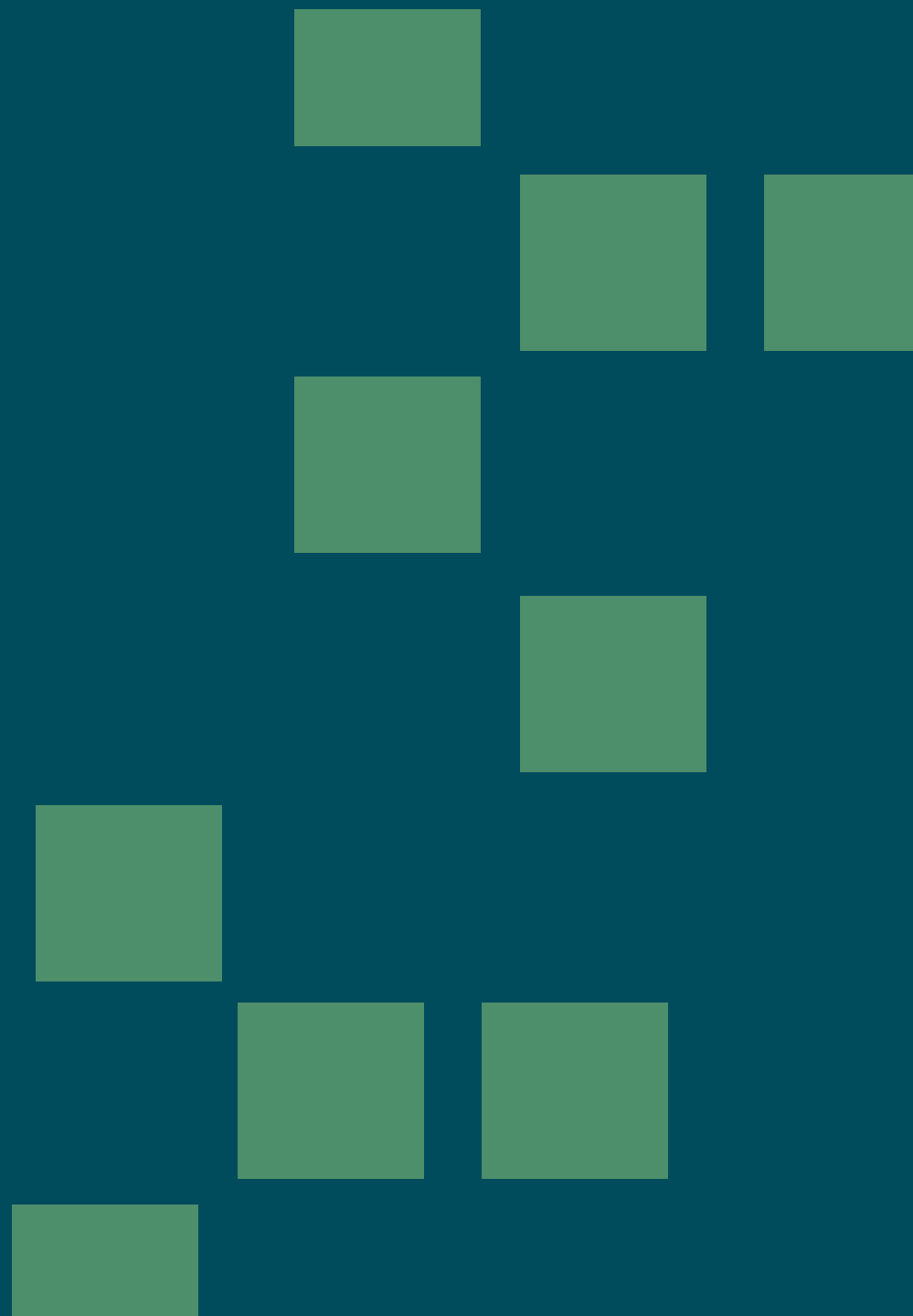
Learn more at:

[www.trueimpact.com](https://www.trueimpact.com)



Presentation Part 1

# Measurement Principles



## **Poll: Which of the following best describes your current measurement approach?**

1. We have dipped our toe into measurement but generally prioritize other other things out of necessity.
2. We focus on measuring a few important metrics and report out on some specific goals.
3. We build measurement into everything we do so so we can use the data for a variety of purposes.





# Why worry about impact measurement now?

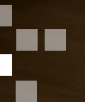
## Elephant #1: Nonprofits + Beneficiaries

- Decreased funding
- Increased demand for services

## Elephant #2: Funders and Companies

- Limited staff and time
- Competing Board priorities

Impact measurement can bridge the gap—helping nonprofits and funders increase trust and accelerate change.





## The **CSR** Do More Good Cycle

Nail company <>  
community alignment  
*(who, what, where)*

Get support to your  
nonprofit partners

Measure your impact and  
confirm alignment

Tell your story,  
internally

Gain the trust of your  
executives/ board

Get more money to your  
community



**The  
Nonprofit  
Do More  
Good Cycle**

```
graph TD; A[Assess community need] -.-> B[Nail your theory of change]; B -.-> C[Build a measurement roadmap]; C -.-> D[Deliver services]; D -.-> E[Track the metrics that matter most]; E -.-> F[Use your data and tell your story]; F -.-> G[Raise funds to continue meeting your mission]; G -.-> A;
```

**Assess community need**

**Nail your theory of  
change**

**Build a measurement  
roadmap**

**Deliver services**

**Track the metrics that  
matter most**

**Use your data and tell  
your story**

**Raise funds to continue  
meeting your mission**

# When it comes to impact measurement and reporting, we've also seen **what doesn't work**.

## Funders

Funders requiring **bespoke reports** or updates on their specific portion of the program.

Evaluations/reporting requirements that lead **the implementation of programs** - cart leading the horse.

Funders unable to **speak to their broader goals** or understand the actual impact of their philanthropy.

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## Nonprofits

**Over complication** of evaluation and outcome tracking.

The **stifling of creativity** due to a funder-driven implementation requirements.

The **spin** required of NPOs to speak to the priority of their funders.





TODAY'S NORTH STAR

**How nonprofits  
and funders can  
work together  
to tell their  
collective impact  
stories.**





# Share a Common Language: Impact



# Focus on **End Outcomes**, Not Process or Vanity Metrics

1

## Inputs

The resources used to run a program.

*Examples:*

- Cash
- Staff
- Equipment
- Office space



2

## Outputs

The goods or services delivered.

*Examples:*

- People Reached
- Meals delivered
- Training provided



3

## Outcomes (aka: Impact!)

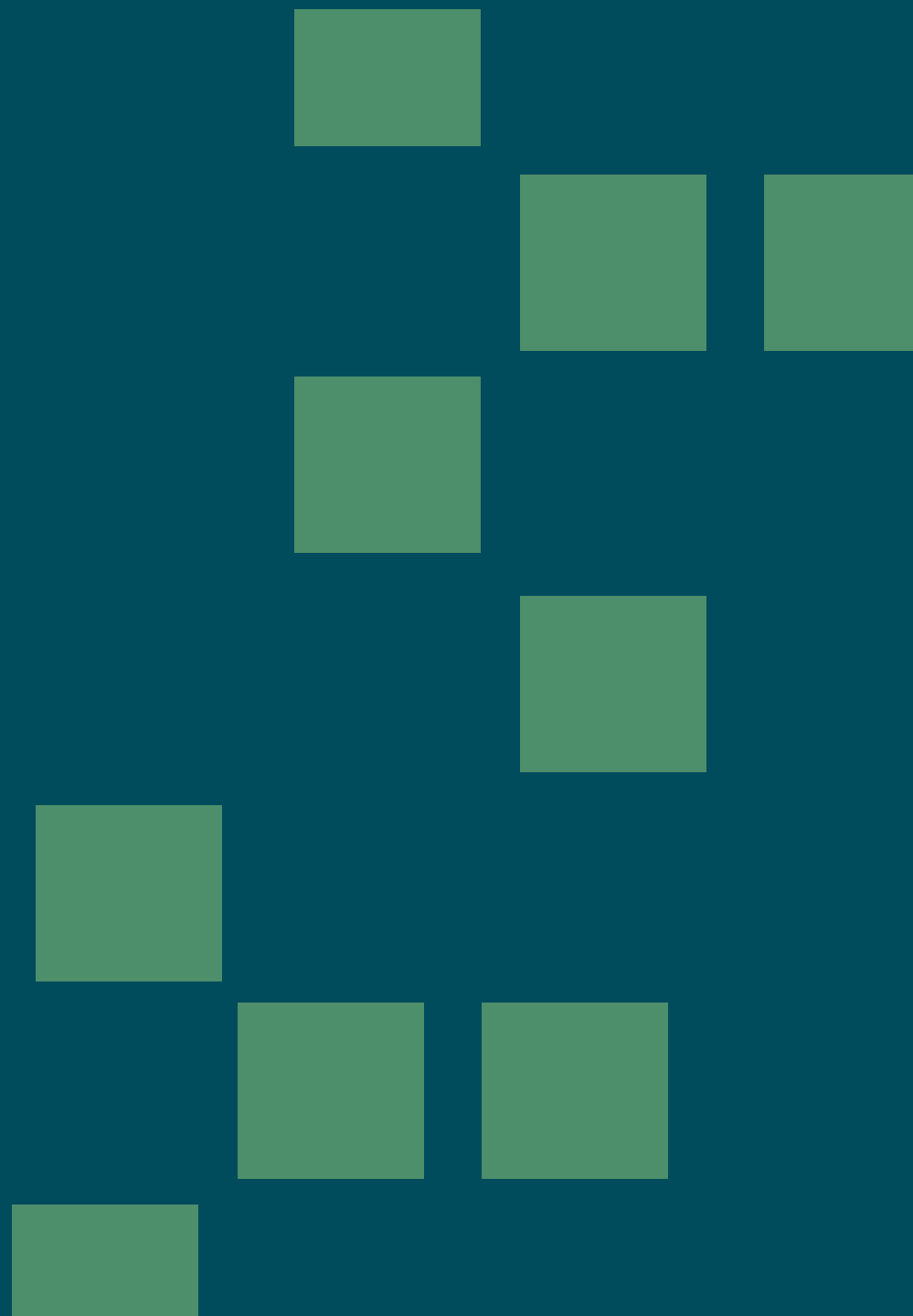
How people's lives improved as a result.

*How many people improved their health, education, or income, and by how much?*



## Poll: Which one is an outcome?

1. 450 trees planted by smallholder farms
2. Launching a new endowed scholarship funded
3. 93 students participate in equity and inclusion workshops



# Actually...none are outcomes.

1

## Input

2

## Output

3

## Outcome

Smallholder farmers are trained in sustainable planting techniques	450 trees planted by smallholder farms	80 mt of CO2 reduced
A new endowed scholarship funded	15 first generation students receive scholarships	12 students graduate from post-secondary school
Teachers are trained in equity and inclusion best practices	93 Students participate in equity and inclusion workshops	Students report feeling safer and report fewer acts of violence



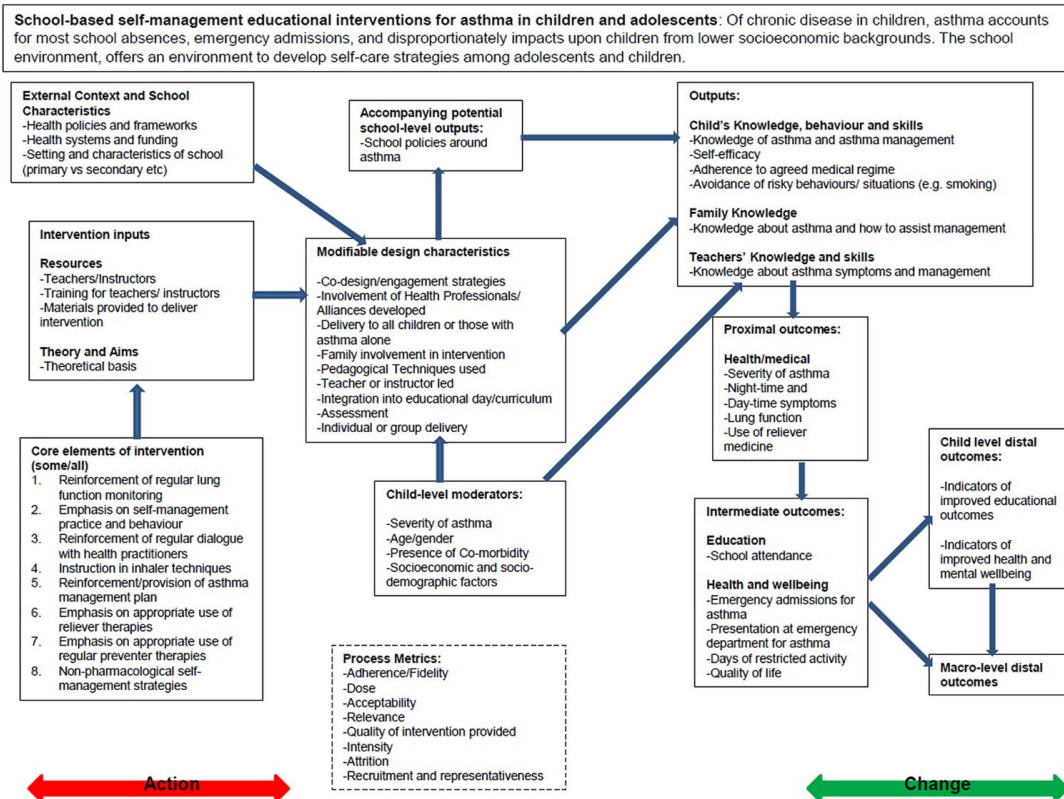
A close-up photograph of two feet wearing burlap shoes. The shoes are made of a coarse, tan-colored fabric. The feet are positioned side-by-side, with the left foot slightly forward. The background is dark and out of focus, showing some indistinct shapes and colors. Overlaid on the image are several semi-transparent squares in various shades of gray, white, and light blue, arranged in a pattern that suggests a grid or a design element. The text "Why can't we just focus on 'people reached'?" is written in a bold, white, sans-serif font in the upper right quadrant of the image.

**Why can't we just focus  
on "people reached"?**

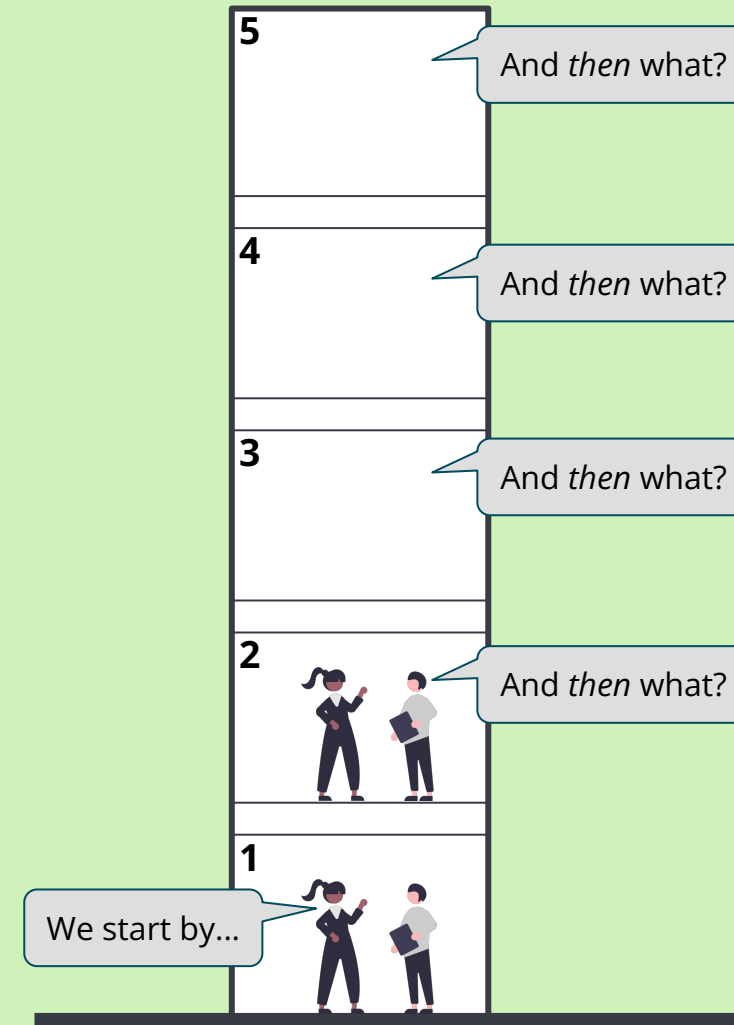


# How to Move from Inputs to Outputs: Logic Models and Elevator Rides

## What People See When They Hear “Logic Model”



## Instead of Logic Models , Think About Elevator Rides



# 4 Golden Reporting Rules for Funders



1

## Keep it Simple

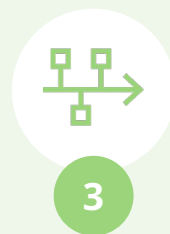
- Count what counts (impact!)
- Allow grantee to tell their story, not yours



2

## Keep it Timely

- Align reporting with the program cycle
- Provide adequate time (no surprises!)



3

## Keep it Uniform

- Provide concise instructions with explicit definitions
- Standardize your reporting template



4

## Keep it Supportive

- Allocate funds for capacity building
- Emphasize learning and improvement



To sum things up:  
**Be a good human.**



# 5 Golden Reporting Rules for Nonprofits



1

## Nail Your Theory of Change

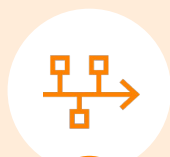
Map how to achieve your mission by asking "and then what?"



2

## Review Evidence to Strengthen Implementation

Confirm the efficacy of your strategies based on existing research



3

## Build a Measurement Roadmap

Plan data collection (or use research) to track outcomes



4

## Share Your Impact Story

Use "Stories and Numbers" to connect with hearts and minds



5

## Start Now

No time but the present—don't get caught without it



# Cross-Sector Discussion



# Cross Sector Discussion

- An exercise in listening, empathy, and surfacing sector-wide insights.



# Step 1

## Activity Explanation

This exercise is about listening, not solving.

We'll surface:

- Your biggest measurement/reporting challenges
- What you wish partners understood

→ Start by forming mixed groups of 3-4 (nonprofit + funder).



# Step 2

## Individual Reflection (3 min)

→ Write 1–2 pain points about measurement/reporting.

Examples:

- Reporting too long
- Missing data
- Too many portals
- Hard to translate stories to outcomes
- Lack of feedback
- Misaligned KPIs



# Step 3

## Small-Group Discussion (5–7 min)

- Step A: Share your top challenge.
- Step B: Cross-Sector Recommendations:
  - What should cross-sector partners do differently? What do you wish they understood?



# Step 4

## Large-Group Share Out (5–7 min)

1. Biggest Pain Points
2. Cross-Sector Recommendations

Questions to consider:

- What's universal?
- Where perspectives differ?
- What's most actionable?



# Step 5

## Facilitator Synthesis





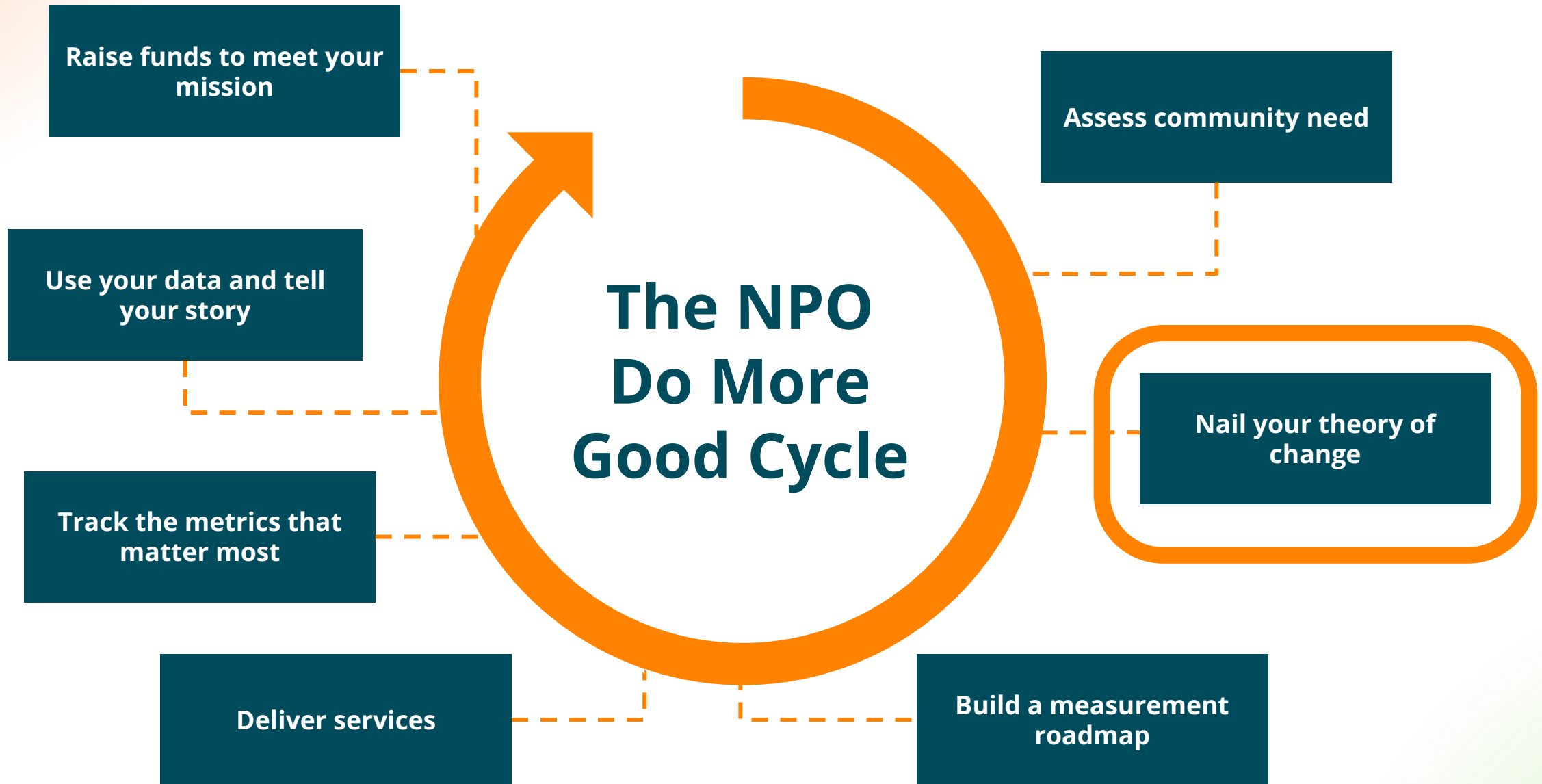
Presentation Part 2

# Putting Principles Into Practice



A photograph of two young children sitting on a patterned rug, reading books. The child on the left is a girl with blonde hair, wearing a pink jacket and a red face sticker, holding a book titled 'Pete the Cat'. The child on the right is a boy with blonde hair, wearing a grey jacket and a blue scarf, also holding a book. In the background, a large book titled 'CREEPY AIR OF UNDERWEAR!' is visible. The image is overlaid with several semi-transparent orange squares of varying sizes, primarily on the right side and bottom. The text 'Nonprofit Best Practices' is overlaid on the left side in a bold, sans-serif font.

# Nonprofit Best Practices





# Incorporate Evidence into Your Program Design

1. **Review evidence informed strategies** with your program's focus, intervention, and impact in mind



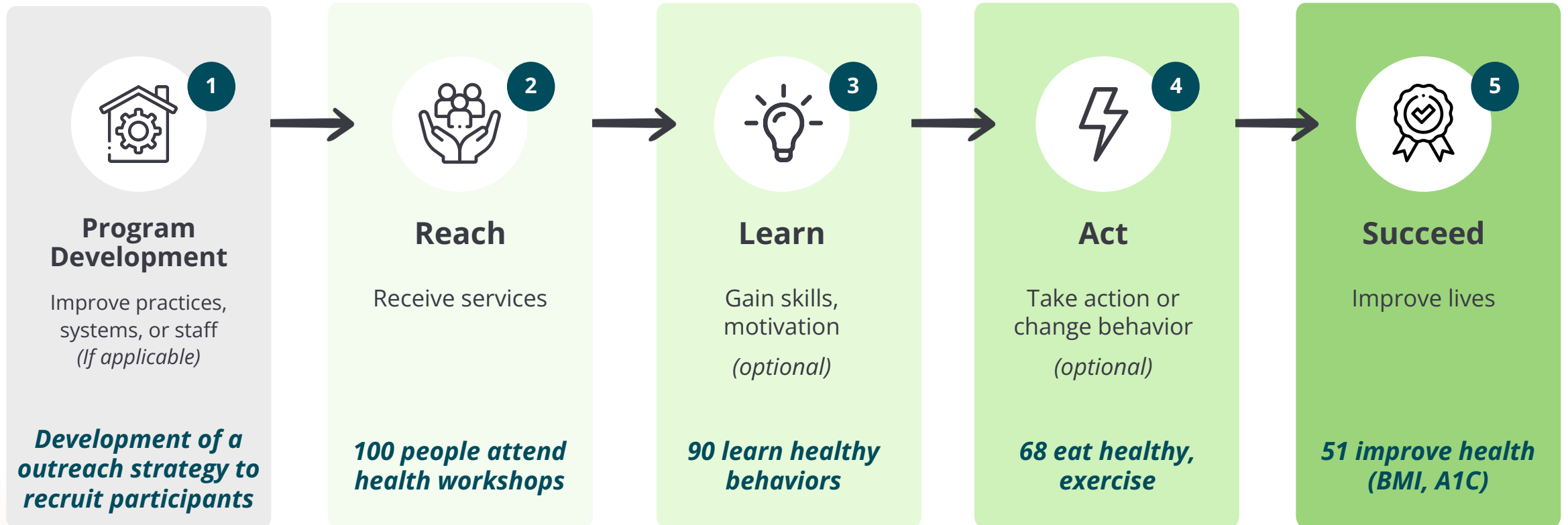
[trueimpact.com/nonprofitresources](https://trueimpact.com/nonprofitresources)

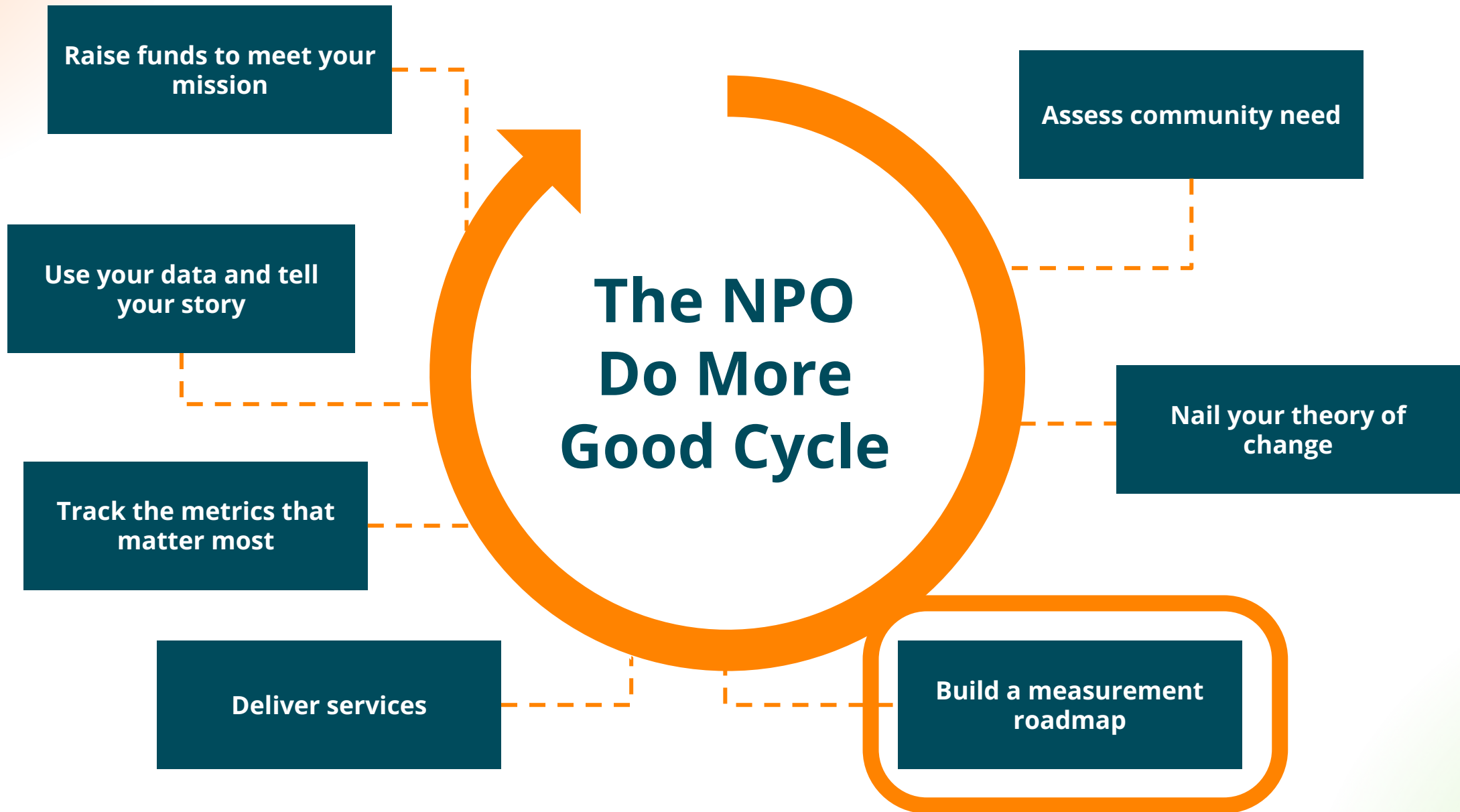
2. **Consider the strength of the evidence**
  - a. Are the findings based on opinions of experts, a single study, or multiple studies?
  - b. Has the strategy been evaluated by someone other than those who developed the strategy?
3. **Revise your implementation plan** to incorporate evidence-informed strategies
4. **Identify areas where existing research** might supplement direct data collection



# Remember the elevator ride...

Use a Five Step Logic Model

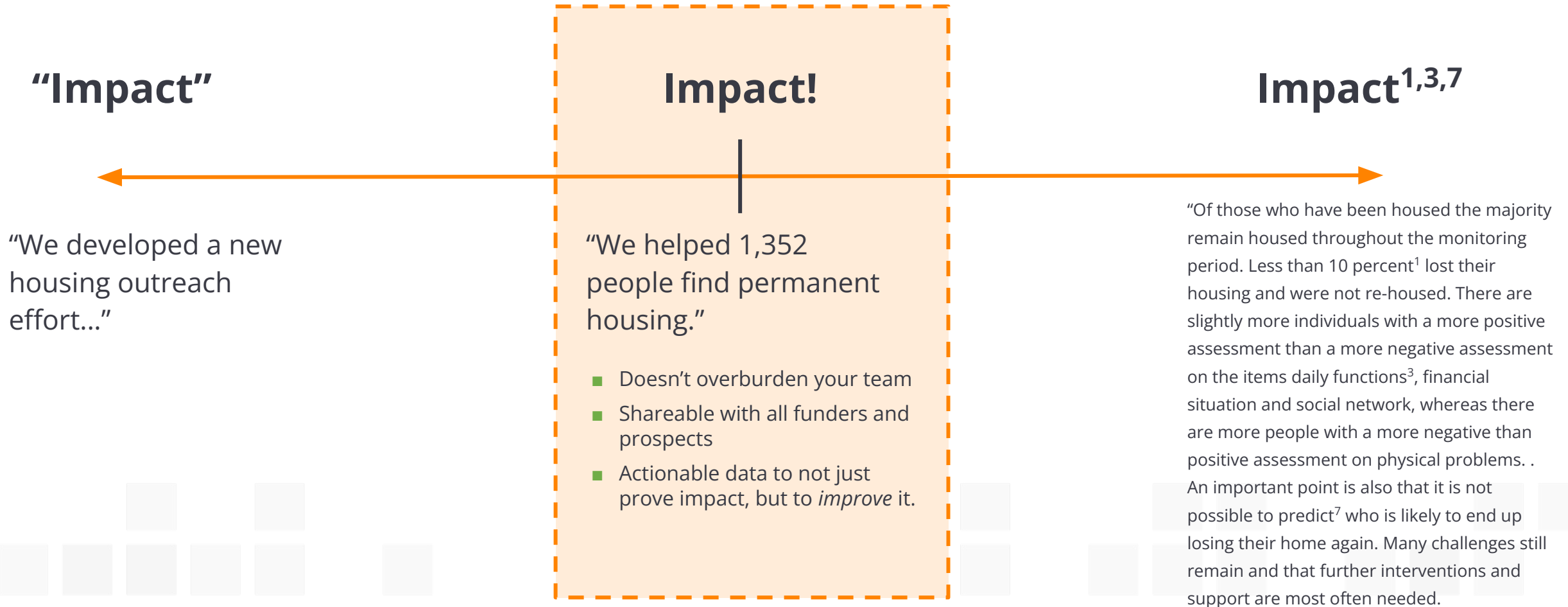






# Think about The Impact Continuum

Find the sweet spot between unimportant and impractical.



# Ensure You Can Trust Your Data

Results are either sufficiently rigorous for reporting or decision making or an opportunity for improving nonprofit capacity.

Guess

## Speculation

- Logical assumptions based on experience



Evidence-Based

## Estimation

- Sampling, piloting
- Previous results
- External studies



Evidence-Based

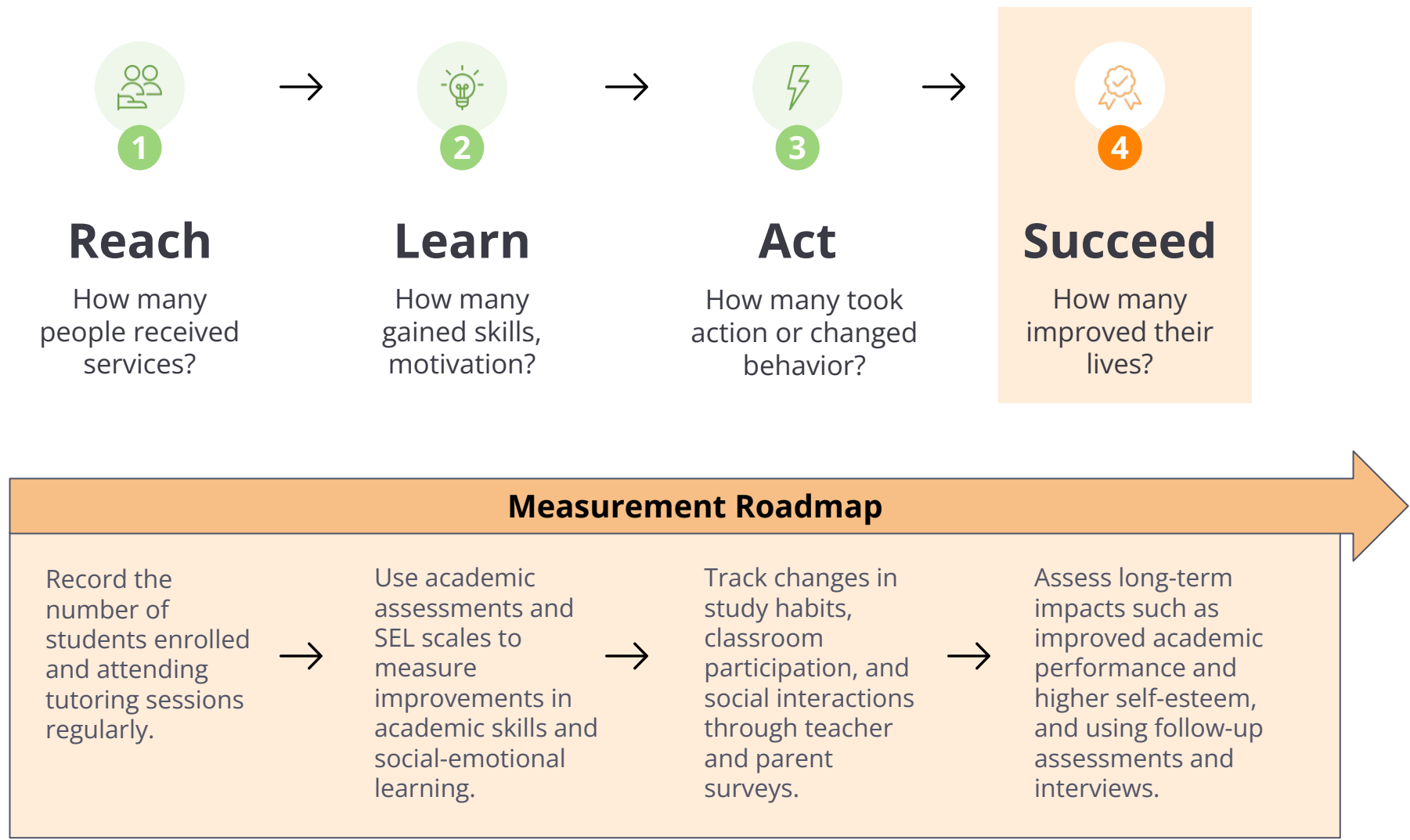
## Direct Measurement

- Randomized controlled trial (scientific confirmation)
- Compare participants to similar population not receiving services
- Systematic outcome tracking



*More rigorous and valuable*

# Youth Tutoring Example



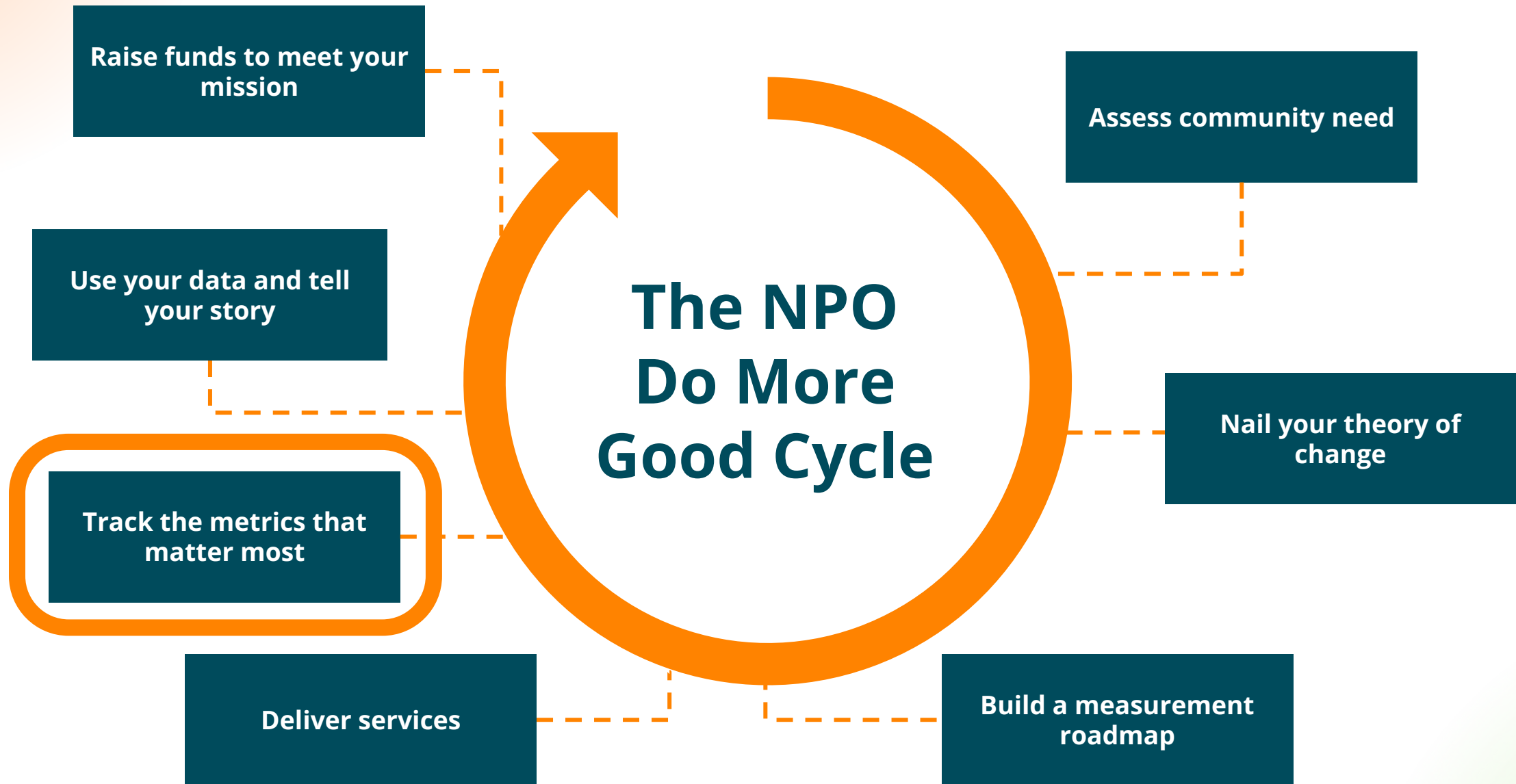
## Quick Links

 True Impact's Top 5 Data Collection Best Practices

 Helping the helpers: how to measure the impact of nonprofit and intermediary support work

**Impact Measurement Resources for Nonprofits**  
Simple Ways to Kickstart Your Impact Measurement





# Recommended Data Collection Strategies

Integrate into initial program planning	→	Creates a shared language internally
Leverage existing strengths or assets	→	Builds on what you are already doing well
Embed in existing systems	→	Highest quality data / least effort
Integrate into grant applications	→	Increases alignment, promotes transparency
Share the purpose, scope, and benefits of data collection to your stakeholders	→	Promotes transparency and clarifies the intended use of the data
Avoid collective sensitive or unnecessary data	→	Reduces burden and maintains privacy



# Funder Best Practices



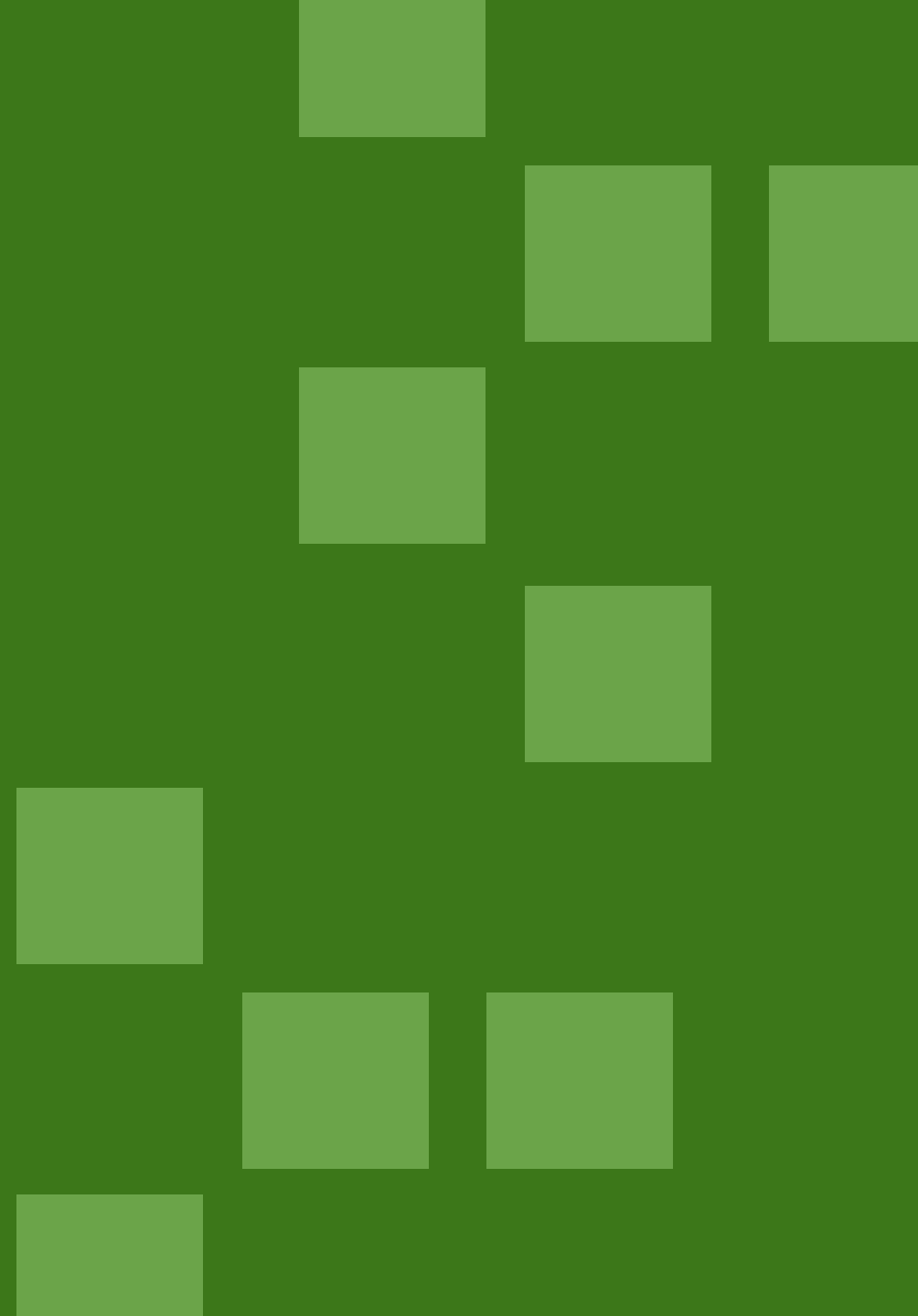
# What we will cover today

How to work best with your nonprofits in three phases of work:

- 1 **Prior to Reporting**
- 2 **During Reporting**
- 3 **Post-Reporting**

FUNDERS - PHASE 1

# Before Reporting Begins

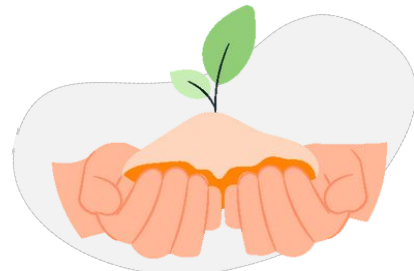


# Know your Who, What, and Where and then trust the experts (nonprofits) to figure out the How.



**Who** do you want to help?

- Ethnic/racial groups
- Age group
- Gender
- Socioeconomic status
- Occupation



**What** ways do you want to help them?

- Issues
- UN SDGs
- Specific outcomes



**Where** do you want to focus your support?

- Market
- Continent
- Country
- Operating region
- Site/facility

Your goal is to know the problem you want to address, not the solution to that problem.

**Your partners are best positioned to offer potential solutions**

# Start the conversation about impact **as early as possible.**

This could be during the grant application process or immediately upon award.

## Why ask *before* the work is done?

- Asking early confirms alignment (who, what, where)
- Opens the door to capacity building conversations BEFORE the work is complete
- You get forecasted impacts for reporting and accountability



# Start with a conversation.

- Explain why you are prioritizing impact
- Discuss roles, responsibilities, and timing
- Explain the benefits to THEM of reporting impact
- Make space for input and questions from the nonprofit, aim to understand their reporting needs and challenges
- Offer constructive feedback to highlight strengths and suggest improvements

If done well:

**Impact Measurement**  **Trust Based Philanthropy**

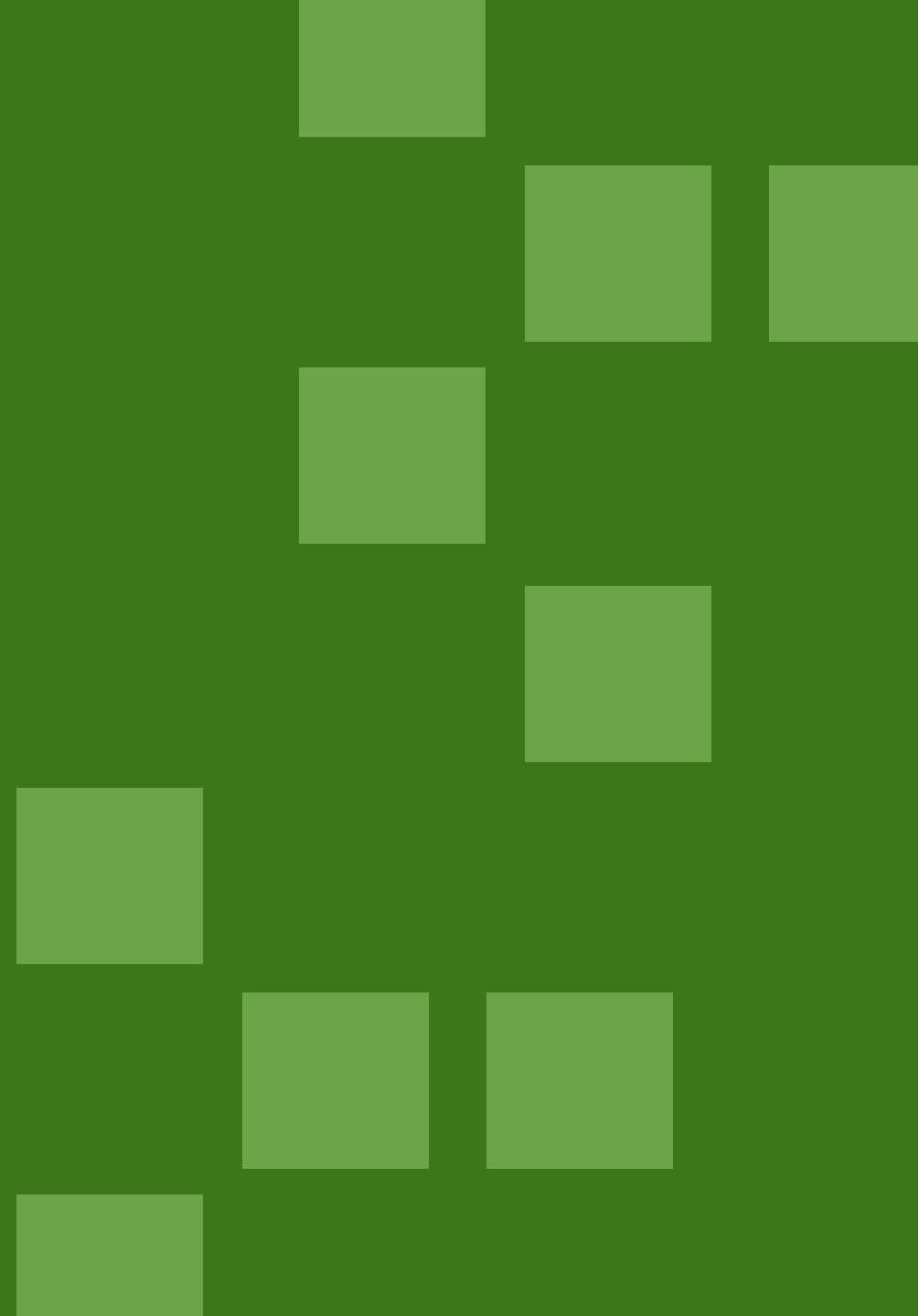
# Other Ways to Be Thoughtful with the Timing of Your Asks

- Be up front with reporting requirements
- Provide adequate time for reporting (no surprises!)
  - *and this one is important -*
- Align reporting expectations with the program cycle for more accurate reporting



FUNDERS - PHASE 2

# During Reporting





# Ask for the Nonprofit's Whole Story, Not Just the Part You Funded

Allow your grantee to report out on the full impact of their program, not just the amount you funded.

**Focus on the art not the paint brushes.**

This empowers your nonprofit with a comprehensive impact report and allows us to get closer to a **universal reporting framework**.





# Standardize Your **Impact** Reporting Template



1

**Program  
Description  
and Mission**



2

**Intervention**  
(Focus and  
Activities)



3

**Community  
Details**  
(Demographics &  
Geographics)



4

**Implementation  
Period**



5

**Theory of  
Change**  
with Specific  
Impacts



6

**Measurement  
Approach**  
w/ Data Backups



7

**Program  
Cost**



8

**Success  
Stories and  
Lessons  
Learned**

## Resources

No need to write these  
down, you can find  
them here:

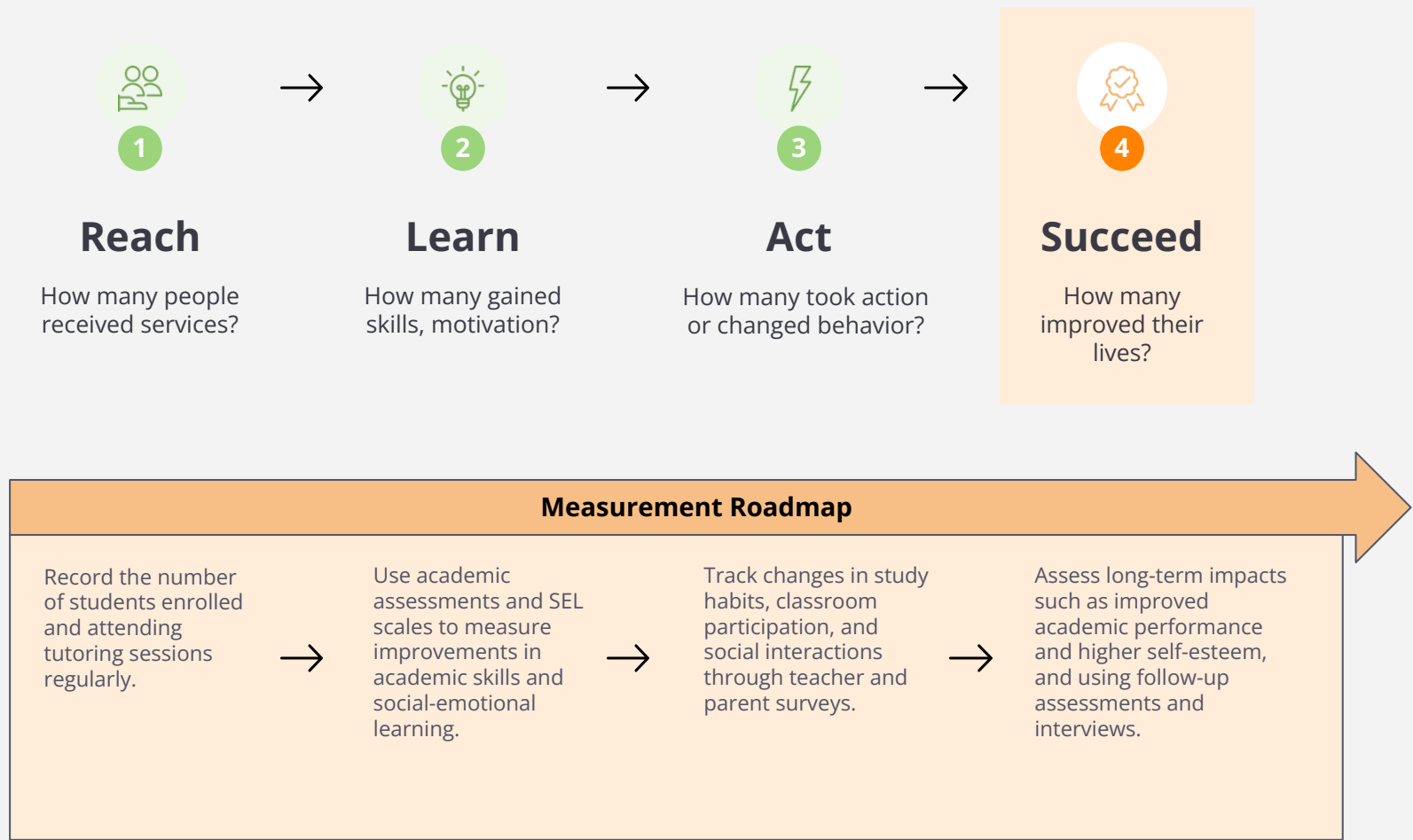
[trueimpact.com/  
funderresources](https://trueimpact.com/funderresources)

Review what you are asking of nonprofits and follow this rule:

**If you ask for something that you don't use for a specific reason, stop asking for it!**

Stay focused  
on your  
common  
language:  
Impact and go  
on “an elevator  
ride” with your  
nonprofit  
partners.

## Youth Tutoring Example



# The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly of Claiming Impact



## \*Takeaway\*

If you are claiming all of the impacts of all of your nonprofit partners, STOP THIS NOW!





# Keep It Simple with a Contribution Claim

## Percent Funded = Percent Claimed

### Program's Impact

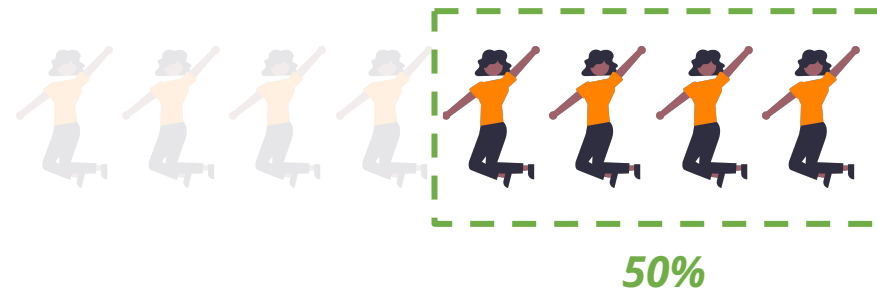
How many people's lives were improved?

### Your Contribution

You funded 50% of the program

### Contribution Claim

50 % funded = 50% claim (most common)



# Three Metrics to Determine Your Claim of Impact

$$\begin{array}{ccccc} \text{Overall Program Impact} & \times & \frac{\text{Your Contribution}}{\text{Total Program Cost}} & = & \text{Your Claim} \\ \text{(The nonprofit helped 300 people improve their health)} & & \frac{\text{(\$1 million)}}{\text{(\$3 million)}} & & \text{(you helped 100 people improve their health)} \end{array}$$

# Maximize Your Investment with Catalytic Funding

More substantial, targeted donations may create social ripple effects, creating additional impact beyond those impacts you are directly funding.

## How to Be Catalytic

- Support programs in a “foundational” capacity (*as determined by the nonprofit*)
- Serve as a “seed funder” and attract other donors
- Fund a new program or model that is then replicated in the future
- Increase the capacity of an organization that results in a sustained and defined net gain in impact



# Catalytic Claims

## Sometimes Your Impact Goes Further

### Program's Impact

How many people's lives were improved?

### Your Contribution

You funded 50% of the program

### Contribution Claim

50 % funded = 50% claim (most common)

### Catalytic Claim

Only applicable if you activated additional indirect gains



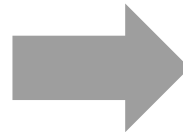
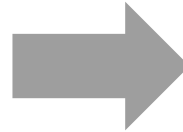
±100%



# Always Make Sure You Can Trust Your Data

## Trustworthy Data

- Accurate
- Verifiable
- Robust
- Standard
- Well designed



## 3 Questions to Get Trustworthy Data

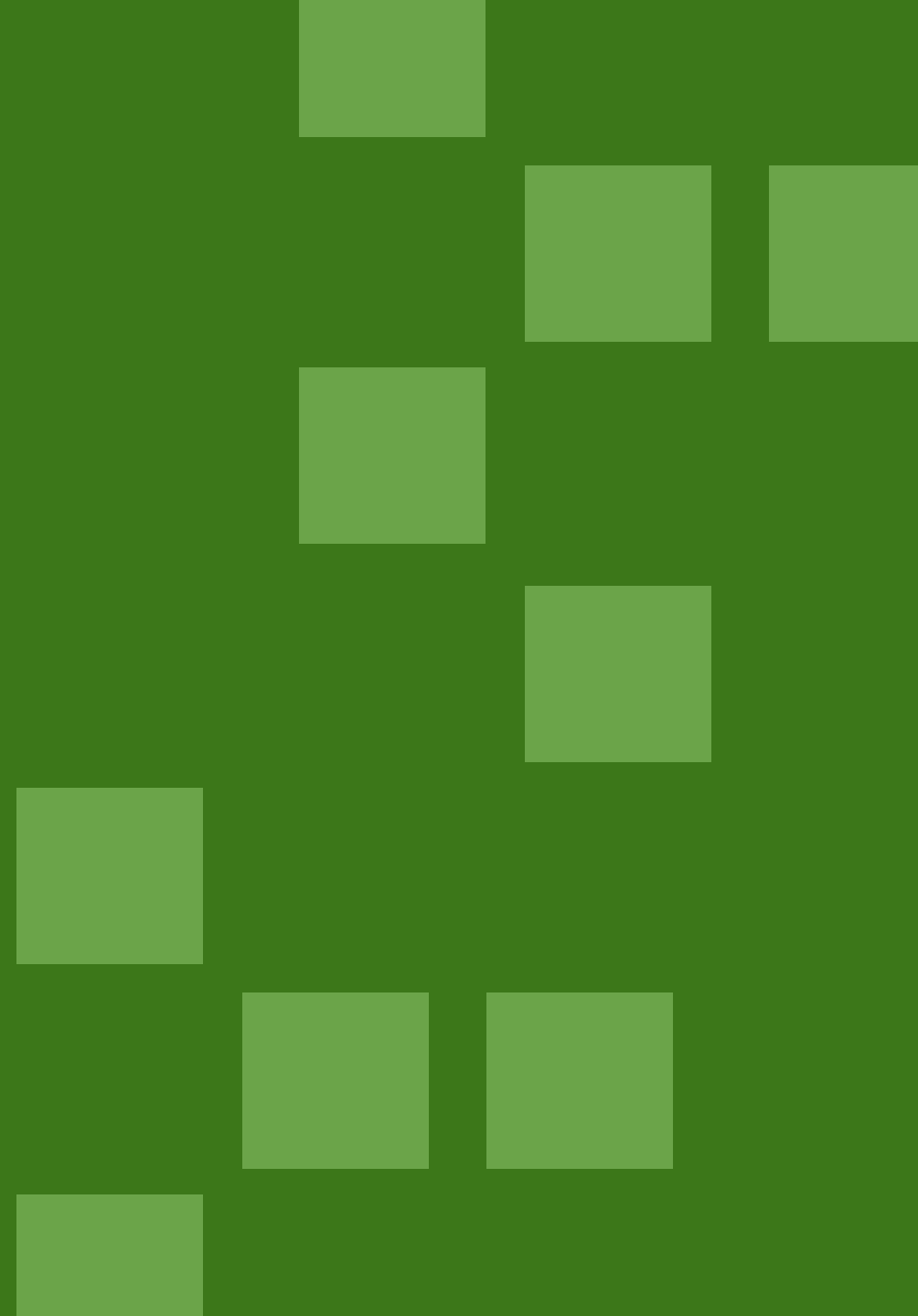
- What is your definition of success (impact)?
- How much impact did you create?
- How do you know?

### **\*Takeaway\***

Create chains of evidence– “receipts” of your impact – that will hold up to auditing, comms, and legal teams.

PHASE 3

# Post- Reporting



# Four KPIs to Guide Strategic Management and Reporting



## 1. Impact

*How much are you improving people's lives and wellbeing?*



### Take Action to Improve

**Share** your impact with internal and external stakeholders to get the credit you deserve



## 2. Alignment

*Does it match your goals?*



**Target** resources to better aligned causes, demographics, and geographies



## 3. Efficiency

*Are you doing it well?*



**Benchmark** similar programs to learn what works best and share results across all grantees



## 4. Data Quality

*Can you trust the data?*



**Improve** data quality to strengthen insights and increase trust between you, your nonprofits, and your stakeholders

# Have Measurement Focused Meetings with Your Grantees

Post-reporting conversations can be a great way to foster a culture of continuous learning and improvement.

Use them to:

- Increase open, transparent communication
- Align on goals
- Evaluate progress
- Address challenges
- Explore opportunities for growth
- Build a supportive and trust-based relationship.





# Invest in Capacity Building

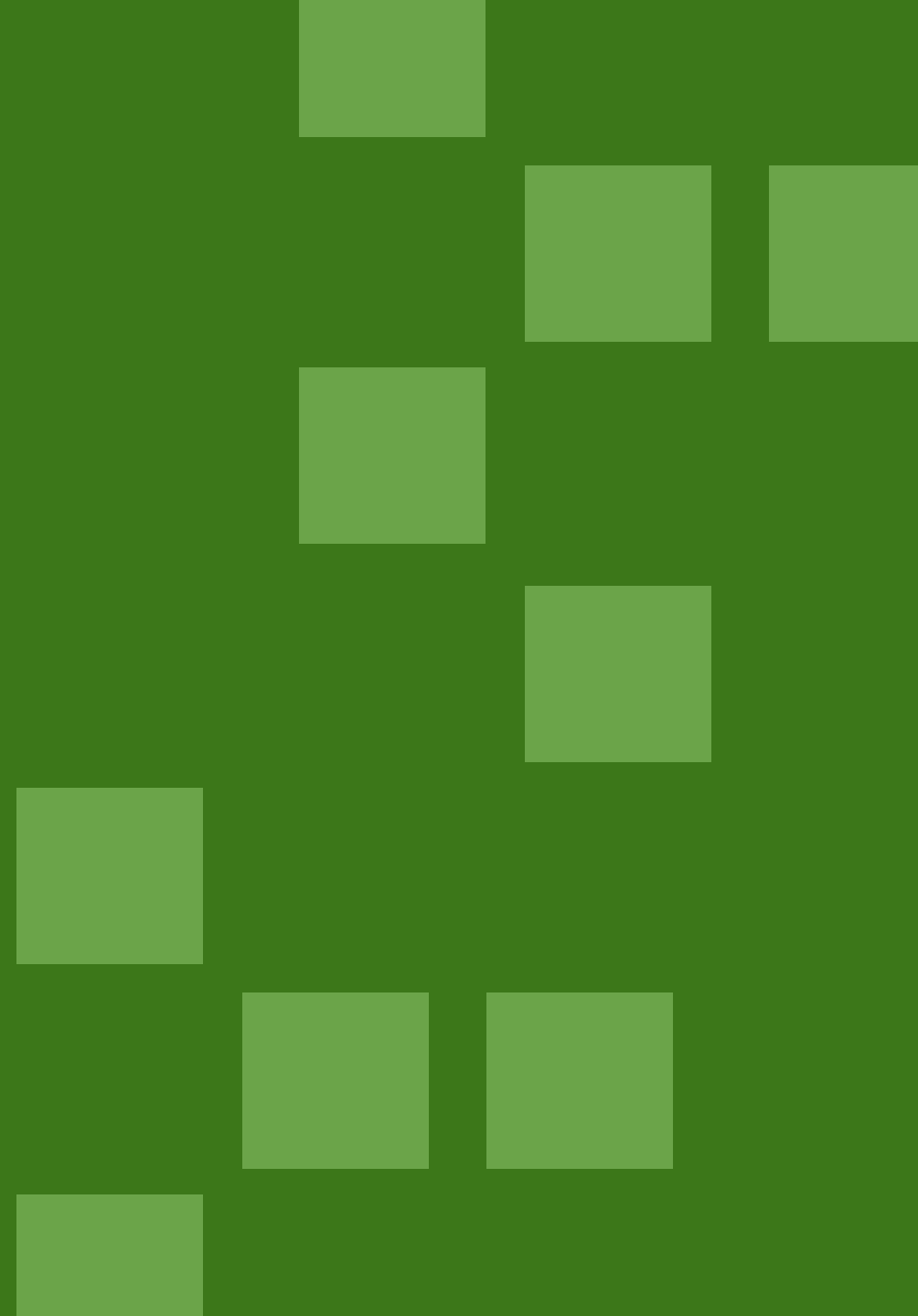
- **Allocate funds for capacity building** (or contribute expertise) to strengthen your grantees' ability to deliver services more effectively - systems change leads to sustained impact.
- **Emphasize learning and improvement** by reflecting on results and sharing best practices.
- **Meet with your partners to help them** utilize this new resource and improve their future impacts.



*It Has to be From Here, Forgotten But Unshaken by Betsy Casañas.  
Photo by Steve Weinik*

For everyone

**Tell your story**





Proper Data-Driven Storytelling

**No stories without  
numbers, and no  
numbers without  
stories.**



# How to Tell Your Story To Do More Good (Funders and Nonprofits)

Share Your Story,  
Internally

Focus on your shared  
language: Impact

Build trust through  
alignment with company  
goals, donor priorities,  
community needs

Share Your Story.  
Externally.

Reach new stakeholders  
and build their trust

Get more resources, and  
more autonomy, to do  
more good!

## **\*Takeaway\***

Once you've built a confident foundation internally, move to targeted external impact-based storytelling.

# Take Home Activities



← If you  
need help!







# Funder Stakeholder Matrix

Have Questions?

We're here to help →

[trueimpact.com](https://trueimpact.com)



Role	Priorities/Needs	Data Needed	How Often	Measurement Plan	Who is responsible for meeting this stakeholder need?
CSR Team					
CSR Team Leader					
ESG Team					
Other C-Suite Leader					
Board					
Marketing					
Partners					



# Nonprofit Stakeholder Matrix

**Have Questions?**

We're here to help →

[trueimpact.com](https://trueimpact.com)



Role	Priorities/Needs	Data Needed	How Often	Measurement Plan	Who is responsible for meeting this stakeholder need?
Program Team					
Program Director					
Marketing and Development Team					
Funders					
Board					
Community Partners					

# Nonprofit Logic Model Guide

**Have Questions?**

We're here to help →

[trueimpact.com](https://trueimpact.com)



	<b>Program Dev.</b> <i>(Ways in which our program is strengthened)</i>	<b>Reach</b> <i>(Those who are engaged)</i>	<b>Learn</b> <i>(Those who gain knowledge, skills, motivation)</i>	<b>Act</b> <i>(Those who take action based on their learning)</i>	<b>Succeed</b> <i>(How lives are improved or contributions to society)</i>
<p><b>What does success look like at each stage?</b></p> <p>A few things to keep in mind:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider what your “success threshold” is for each stage of the logic model.</li> <li>• Consider the different indicators of success for each stage.</li> <li>• Consider who is shaping that success threshold - your stakeholder matrix could help with this.</li> <li>• Consider your community needs and organization mission.</li> </ul>					



# Nonprofit Measurement Roadmap

Have Questions?

We're here to help →

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	<b>Program Dev.</b> <i>(Ways in which our program is strengthened)</i>	<b>Reach</b> <i>(Those who are engaged)</i>	<b>Learn</b> <i>(Those who gain knowledge, skills, motivation)</i>	<b>Act</b> <i>(Those who take action based on their learning)</i>	<b>Succeed</b> <i>(How lives are improved or contributions to society)</i>
Indicators of success					
How are you currently tracking this indicator? If not, what tracking strategies could be put in place?					
How can you increase data quality?					
What are next steps and who should be involved?					

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# Measuring Corporate Social Impact

Recommendations  
for Better  
Partnerships  
and Reporting

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A practical toolkit, designed with decades of experience across two flagship organizations, to help you measure and maximize your impact.

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**Download today:**  
**[trueimpact.com/toolkit](https://trueimpact.com/toolkit)**

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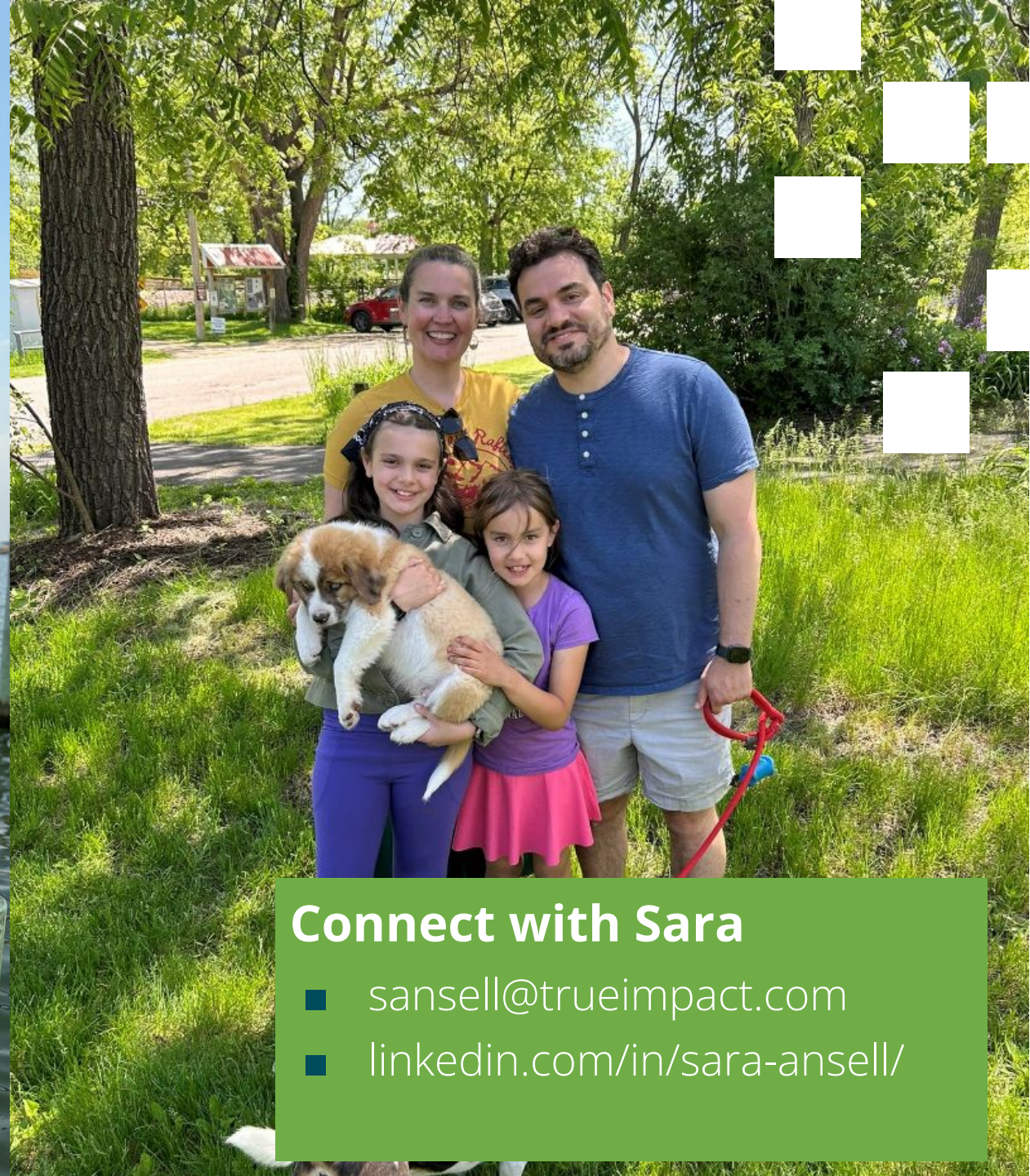
Developed in Partnership by:





## Connect with Gabe

- [gcohen@trueimpact.com](mailto:gcohen@trueimpact.com)
- [linkedin.com/in/gabecohen/](https://www.linkedin.com/in/gabecohen/)



## Connect with Sara

- [sansell@trueimpact.com](mailto:sansell@trueimpact.com)
- [linkedin.com/in/sara-ansell/](https://www.linkedin.com/in/sara-ansell/)